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THE THEORY OF THE HEROIC EPIC IN ITALIAN CRITICISM OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

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in Italian Criticism of the Sixteenth Century

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Introduction

The attention of the writer was called to the subject of the theory of the heroic epic through his interest in tracing the relationship of ideas between the French and the Italian critics in the sixteenth century. The Renaissance is Italian in origin. It is generally known that whole armies composed of the nobility of France bore back into their native country the germs of that southern civilization which later blossomed into full growth. The armies of Charles VIII, of Louis XII, and of Francis I, engaged in the struggle for supremacy in the coveted land of Italy, were swept back and forth in the maelstrom caused by the changing tides of fortune, with the result that by the end of the first quarter of the sixteenth century the seed had been sown and the penetration of Italian culture into the spirit and thought of France had already become an established fact. Francis I did all in his power to further Italian art and letters in France. At his court gathered a large group of Italian poets and artists; it was there, for instance, that Alamanni wrote his Girone and his Avarchide; it was there that Benvenuto Cellini created some of his masterpieces. The relation between the two countries was close; and individuals, driven either by political necessity or by motives of pleasure, undertook the long journey between the two countries. Du Bellay and Ronsard spent some time in Italy; Bernardo Tasso, Scaliger, and Castelvetro remained for a protracted period in France.

Thanks to these means of communication, there were imported from Italy into France, together with the revived interest in classical literature, definite ideas regarding the forms of the literary art. It was with his thoughts reverting to Italy that Du Bellay wrote the following in the Défence et Illustration de la langue française (II, V): "Ce sera toy veritablement qui feras

hausser la teste à ton pauvre langaige,et d'un brave sourcil s'egaler aux superbes langues greque et latine,comme a faict de nostre tens en son vulgaire un Arioste Italien,que j'oseroy' (n'estoit la sainctetté des vieulx poëmes) comparer à un Homere et Virgile. Comme luy donq',qui a bien voulu emprunter de nostre langue les noms et l'hystoire de son poëme,choysi moy quelque un de ces beaux vieulx romans françoys,comme un Lancelot,un Tristan,ou autres: et en fay renaître au monde un admirable Iliade et laborieuse Eneïde," and it is clear from Du Bellay's chapter on the "long poëme françoys" that he considers the epic the highest form of poetry.

Everwhere in the writings of the Pléiade the Italians were put on the same footing as the ancients as literary authorities. Moreover,the Pléiade attempted and put into effect the substitution of the ancient and the Italian genres for the forms of the fifteenth century. It was the Pléiade that established in France the epic,the tragedy,the ode,the satire,and the elegy - forms which had been discussed so considerably in Italy. It was not as much the borrowing of "genres",however,as in the actual appropriation of ideas,even to the extent of a reproduction of the very matter,that the Pléiade was Italy's debtor. Recent investigation has shown conclusively that often there is little more than a servile copying. Such a work as that of Pierre Villey (1),in which he demonstrates indisputably the extensive borrowing from Speroni,proves this beyond any doubt.

(1) Les Sources italiennes de la "Deffense et Illustration de la langue françoise" de Joachim Du Bellay. Paris,1908.
Cf.also on this question;Parturier,"Quelques sources italiennes de Ronsard in Revue de la Renaissance VI,1-2,(1905); E.Picot,Les français italianisants au XVIe siècle,Paris,1906; and studies by J.Vianey in the Bulletin Italien,etc.

Such considerations would lead one to conclude that the French attempts to reproduce the heroic poem and the discussions in France regarding the manner in which it should be reproduced were influenced by the example and the precept of the Italians. Of the vast quantity of epics which were written in Italy after 1547, the year in which appeared the Italia liberata of Trissino, the first heroic poem written according to classical rules, it is reasonable to suppose that a number found their way into France. It can be asserted with a greater degree of certainty that the critical works of the Italians were circulated in France, a fact of which the perusal of the Bibliographie lyonnaise, giving the works published in Lyons alone, will furnish convincing evidence. Furthermore, we know that Scaliger wrote his Poetices Libri Septem in France, and that Castelvetro not only wrote at Lyons his commentary on Aristotle but there made three copies with his own hand. (1)

It is manifest, then, that anyone undertaking to define the extent and the character of the influence of Italian ideas regarding this subject on French writers would have to examine on the one hand the Italian poems which the French had before them as models, and on the other hand the body of theoretical precepts which was accessible to the French.

In view of the fact that the interest of the writers of the Pléiade in the epic is primarily theoretical - only one of them, Ronsard, attempted to write an epic poem - it is natural that the first step in such an investigation as I have mentioned should be the examination of the theory of the heroic epic as expounded by Italian writers, and it is this examination that is attempted in the present dissertation. Accordingly, this study aims to be the first chapter in a history of the introduction and the

(1) Vita del Castelvetro dal Lodovico Antonio Muratori, in Castelvetro's Opere varie critiche, page 45.

assimilation in France of the Italian ideas concerning the heroic epic. The task it undertakes is that of collecting and analysing the available body of Italian opinion on this matter during that period of the sixteenth century which is early enough to allow of its exercising ~~any~~ influence upon the ideas of the Pléiade.

Ronsard's Franciade, appearing in 1572, which represented to the minds of the members of the Pléiade the long awaited consummation and embodiment of their critical theories on the heroic epic, really marks the termination, so far as the Pléiade is concerned, of theoretical discussion regarding this form of poetry. Establishing this date - 1572- as the limit of our discussion, we find that Castelvetro, writing in 1570, is the last author of importance in Italy who could have ~~possibly~~ exercised any influence on the French theory. Consequently, this dissertation has been limited to the treatment of the discussion from Vida (1519), the first writer in Italy to deal with the question of the heroic epic, to Castelvetro (1570), a period in which the theory of the epic became definitely established.

The material examined consists of commentaries and editions of Aristotle and Horace, various treatises on poetry of different degrees of originality, and lastly, the fragmentary expressions of opinion such as those contained in letters or short essays. The expression of theoretical ideas on each subject by the different critics has first been summarized according to chronological order, and then these ideas have been compared in an endeavor to place them in their proper perspective as regards their originality, their relationship with preceding views, and their general importance as contributions to the discussion as a whole.

Chapter I. Aristotle and Horace

The influence of the Poetics of Aristotle and of Horace on the discussion of the theory of the epic seems to justify the inclusion of a short historical sketch of the various texts and commentaries of these works which appeared in the sixteenth century in Italy, because their publication had some bearing on the comprehension and dissemination of critical ideas.

The modern history of Aristotle's Poetics begins in the second half of the fifteenth century, when the Greek text became known among the learned in Italy. At the end of the century (1498) Giorgio Valla made the first Latin translation from it. The Poetics, for some reason, was not included in the Aldine Aristotle of 1495-98, but first appeared in the Aldine of 1508. The editio princeps of the Greek text (edited by Ducas) appeared in 1508, and the prestige of the Aldine lasted about three centuries and was accepted without question by successive editors. In 1555 Morel made a recension based on the Paris manuscript, but it left little or no mark on the general criticism of the book; Sydburg (1584), for instance, ignored it. Several of the sixteenth century editors of the Poetics, such as Paccius, Madius, Robortelli, and Victorius, had access to manuscripts to which they referred only for a new reading on certain passages; they evidently did not question the value of the Aldine text. In 1536 Paccius (Pazzi) published a revised Latin version, which was reprinted with slight changes in Basle in 1537 and in Paris in 1538. In 1548 Robortelli published his Librum Aristotelis de Arte Poetica Explicationes. The following year Bernardo Segni published the first Italian translation of the Poetics. In 1550 Madius (Maggi) and Lombardus published the In Aristotelis Librum de Poetica Explanationes, and in 1560 Victorius (Vettori) published his Commentarii in primum Librum Aristotelis de Arte Poetarum.

Of the Ars Poetica of Horace, which had never been lost sight of, there were in Italy a large number of editions and commentaries during the sixteenth century. In 1531 Parrhasius published in Naples his commentary on the Ars Poetica. In 1535 Ludovico Dolce made an

Italian translation of the Epistle to the Pisos; in 1546 Franciscus Philippus Pedimontus published his edition; Robortelli made a paraphrase in 1548,that of Madius was published in 1550; in 1552 appeared the commentary of Jacobus Grifoli Lucinian,followed the next year by that of De Nores; one year later (1554) appeared that of Luisinus, and in 1555 Fabricius published his edition.

The Poetics of Aristotle and of Horace,then,were widely read during the sixteenth century,and since their influence on the discussion of the theory of the epic during that century is undoubted, it seems advisable to give a short résumé of the ideas therein expressed regarding the epic,in order that it may be easier to recognize what is derived from each and what is original in the discussions with which we shall deal.

Aristotle's ideas may be briefly summarized as follows. His Poetics furnishes no complete theory of poetry. The central thought of his doctrine is that poetry,imitative art in its highest form,is an expression of universal ideas. Art imitates the ideal,and a work of art becomes an ideal representation of human life. "Imitation", as Aristotle uses the word,is then equivalent to "producing" or "creating according to a true idea".(1) Poetry,expressing the universal,is distinguished by its subject from history,which deals with the particular. Poetry is not concerned with fact,but with that which transcends fact; it deals with that which ought to be. This world of the possible,on a plane higher than that of the world of experience,may pass the bounds of reality,but there is in it no wanton violation of rational laws. The poet,while apparently concerned only with the particular,really reproduces a concrete fact so transfigured that the higher truth,the universal idea,shines through it.

Epic poetry is a mode of imitation representing serious subjects, such as the noble actions of noble personages,or at least of personages

(1) Cf.Prof.S.H.Butcher's Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, London,1898,page 152.

better than ordinary men. The poet,for instance,in portraying men quick or too slow to anger,or with similar infirmities of character must know how to represent them as such,and at the same time as good men. "In the characters there are four points to aim at",says Aristotle. "First and foremost,they shall be good. There will be an element of character in the play,if what a personage says or does reveals a certain moral purpose; and a good element of character,if the purpose so revealed is good". (1) Such goodness Aristotle did not limit to any type of personage,but felt that it was possible "even in a woman or a slave,though the one is perhaps an inferior,and the other a wholly worthless being". The characters portrayed by the epic,accordingly,have their basis in moral goodness; but the goodness is of an heroic order. The grandeur which Aristotle demands is a moral grandeur; greatness according to his ideas,can never take the place of goodness. So far as the actual form is concerned,epic poetry may be either simple or complex,it may be a story of character,as the Odyssey,or one of suffering,as the Iliad; it requires "peripities", "discoveries"(2),and scenes of suffering. The action of the epic is large and manifold; it is the story of the past,constructed from the backward-reaching imagination of the writer; it relates a great and complete action which deals with the fortunes of a people,the destiny of mankind,or which sums up the life of a period.

Two views were currently held in Greece as to the end of poetry,whether epic or other. The traditional one,which had gained wide acceptance,was that poetry has a direct moral purpose,that the primary function of the poet is that of a teacher. The other theory, put into definite shape by Aristotle,considered poetry an emotional delight,its purpose being to give pleasure. Professor Bywater says:(3)

(1) Cf.Prof.Bywater's Aristotle on the Art of Poetry,Oxford,1909,p.43.
(2) Aristotle defines 'peripity' as "the change from one state of things within the play to its opposite of the kind described,and that too in the probable or necessary sequence of events",and he gives as an example the result of the arrival of the messenger in Oedipus,who coming to gladden Oedipus and to remove his fears regarding his mother,reveals the secret of his birth,and thus brings about an opposite state of things, and again in Lynceus,when the hero,with Danaus at his side,is about to be put to death,and the incidents bring it about that he is saved and Danaus is killed. "A Discovery is,as the very word implies,a change from ignorance to knowledge,and thus to either love or hate,in the personages marked for good or evil fortune". Bywater,page 31.
(3) p.359.

"In Aristotle's view epic poetry has the same end as Tragedy; and its immediate effect is the same in kind,the pleasurable excitement of the emotions of pity and fear. Aristotle's view is that the difference between them is mainly one of manner; so that apart from that they are fundamentally alike- with the same literary elements,the same canons of procedure,the same emotional effect,and the same ultimate end and justification". (1) Aristotle admitted not only an aesthetic pleasure but also a moral one,but the question of morality enters into consideration only as implied in the aesthetic ideal.

Aristotle has very little to say regarding the methods of treatment of the epic,except where he discusses the question of unity. He has nothing to say,for example,as to whether it is better to commence "ab ovo" or "in medias res",whether it is preferable to have a gradual beginning and hold the reader in suspense or to state the subject at once,whether to begin in a manner not too bombastic or to start with something grand and imposing - matters which sixteenth century critics considered important,as we shall see later. The action of the epic,as a result of the introduction of episodes,advances slowly,and,by the use of these retarding elements,the mental strain is lessened,only to be intensified when the climax approaches. Elaborate diction should be used only in places where there is no action and no personage or thought to be revealed,otherwise,an over-ornate style tends to obscure the matter. The parts of the epic are plot (which Aristotle defines as a"combination of incidents"), characters,diction,and thought; the plot having as its parts "peripities" and "discoveries".

The epic,which is in narrative form,is in one kind of verse, namely the "heroic" or hexameter,a meter which was assigned to it as a result of a feeling of the manifest incongruity of employing any other than this majestic rhythm. It should be composed "in one kind of verse" because it would appear very unnatural to write an

(1) Prof.Butcher maintains that "there is nothing in the Poetics to bear out the assumption of many commentators that epic poetry excites precisely the same emotions as tragedy"(p.246,footnote),but one is justified in questioning his interpretation. It seems to me that Bywater,opposing Butcher's view,has grasped the true meaning and intent of Aristotle.

epic in a medley of meters.

The question of unity receives a longer treatment in the Poetics than many of the other points discussed. By the rule of beauty a poetic creation must have at the same time unity and plurality. If it is too small,the whole is perceived but not the parts; if too large,the parts are perceived but not the whole. On this principle a whole such as the Trojan War is too vast in its compass even for epic treatment; it cannot be grasped by the mind and incurs the risk of becoming a series of detached incidents. The Platonic idea of an organism evidently underlies Aristotle's rules concerning unity. It is especially evident in one passage: " The construction of its stories should be like that in a drama; they should be based on a single action,one that is a complete whole in itself,with a beginning, middle,and end,so as to enable the work to produce its own proper pleasure,with all the organic unity of a living creature".(1) The unity of a plot does not consist in having one man as its subject; an infinity of things befalls that one man,some of which cannot be reduced to unity,and there are many actions of one man which cannot be made to form one action. Homer,in writing the Odyssey,did not make the poem cover all that befell his hero,but he represented one action with its several incidents so closely connected that the transposal or withdrawal of any of them would have interfered with the continuity of the whole. In poetry,then,the story,as an imitation of action, must represent one action,a complete whole with beginning,middle,and end,with its several incidents closely connected. The general law of unity laid down in the Poetics for an epic poem is almost the same as for tragedy,but the epic,being of wider compass,can admit many episodes which serve to fill in the pauses of the action,or to diversify the interest,or to give embellishment to the narrative. The introduction of episodes,however,conduces to the result that there is less unity in the imitation of epic poets,inasmuch as from one epic many tragic plots may be derived. It is an evident fact,however,

(1) Cf.Prof.Bywater's Aristotle on the Art of Poetry,page 71.

that if a single story were treated,it would seem curt when briefly told,and thin and extenuated when prolonged to the usual epic length. On this point Bywater translates Aristotle as follows: " In saying that there is less unity in an epic,I mean an epic made up of a plurality of actions,in the same way as the Iliad and the Odyssey have such parts,each one of them in itself of some magnitude; yet the structure of the two Homeric poems is as perfect as can be,and the action in them as nearly as possible one action".(1) Homer did not attempt to treat the Trojan War in its entirety- though it was a whole with a definite beginning and end - through a feeling apparently that it was too long a story to be grasped in one view,or if not that,too complicated from the variety of incident. As it is,he has selected one section of the whole,bringing in many other matters as episodes,as,for example,the catalogue of the ships.

The only unity enjoined by Aristotle for the epic is the unity of action which we have just discussed. The doctrine of the unity of time is based on one passage in the Poetics where Aristotle states that the epic is of greater length than tragedy,"which is due to its action having no fixed limit of time,whereas tragedy endeavors to keep as far as possible within a single circuit of the sun". (2) As to the length of the epic,it must be possible for the beginning and the end of the work to be comprehended in one view,a condition which will be fulfilled if the poem is shorter than the old epics, and about as long as the series of tragedies offered for one hearing. Aristotle gives a general formula as a limit to the length of the tragedy which may by analogy be applied to that of the epic. He says that a length " which allows of a hero passing by a series of probable or necessary stages from misfortune to happiness or from happiness to misfortune" may suffice as a limit for the magnitude of the story.(3) The epic,being in narrative form,may describe a number of simultaneous

(1) Cf.Bywater,Aristotle on the Art of Poetry,page 91.
(2) Ibid.p.15.
(3) Ibid.p.25.

incidents and these,if germane to the subject,increase the body of the poem without destroying its unity.

The incidents of the epic,as we have already seen,are not those of ordinary life. The distinction between historian and poet consists chiefly in this,that the one describes the thing that has been, and the other the kind of thing that might be. There should be nothing irrational in this transcending of fact,however,for nothing provokes more quickly a critical or hostile attitude than a seeming contradiction of the laws of causality to which poetry is subject. It is the poet's function to describe what is possible as being probable or necessary. One has to justify the improbable either by showing it to be in accordance with opinion or by urging that at times it is not improbable for things to happen contrary to ordinary probability. Incidents,improbable perhaps if measured by the likelihood of everyday occurrences,are only improbable to the same degree that characters capable of great deeds and great passions are rare. The only justification for the admission of the impossible is in the heightened wonder and admiration which results. The marvellous,moreover,is a cause of pleasure,a fact which is evident because everyone tells stories with additions,in the belief that he is giving his hearers enjoyment. From one point of view,all impossibilities in a poet's description of things are false; but from another viewpoint they are justifiable if they serve the end of poetry itself,that is,if they make some part of the composition more astounding. If,however, the poetic end might have been as well or better attained without sacrifice of technical correctness in such matters,the impossibility is not to be justified. The epic,then,affords opportunity for the introduction of the marvellous; but it is necessary to remember when introducing the improbable,which is the chief factor in the marvellous,that a likely impossibility is always preferable to an unconvincing possibility. The story should never be made up of improbable incidents; if,however, such incidents are unavoidable,they should be outside the main action. The poet must learn the art of

fiction,he must tell lies skilfully so as not to violate the laws which make the real world rational. The fiction here intended is not simply that fiction which is blended with fact in every poetic narrative of real events; there is a reference here to the larger idea of fiction involving the introduction of events of a marvellous and supernatural character,such as the stories of the gods.

Homer,whom Aristotle finds admirable in every respect,is especially so in this,that he alone understands the part to be played by the poet himself in the poem. The poet should say very little in propria persona,as he is no imitator when so doing.

The epic agrees with tragedy (although in Aristotle's opinion it is a lower form of art than the latter) in being an imitation of serious subjects in a grand kind of verse. Epic poetry is divided into the same species as tragedy,that is,as we have already seen,it may be either simple or complex,it may be a story of character or of suffering. Its parts,with the exception of "song" and "spectacle" (that is,melody and dramatic presentation), must be the same. The epic differs from tragedy (a) in that it is in one kind of verse and in narrative form;(b) in its constituents: all the parts of an epic are included in tragedy,but those of tragedy are not all to be found in the epic; (c) the epic is of greater length.

From what we have said it will be evident that the poet's function is to describe not the thing which has happened,but that which might happen,and in that particular the poet differs from the historian who describes the thing that has been. If a poet should happen to take a subject from actual history,he is on that account none the less a poet,contends Aristotle,since some historical occurrences may very well be considered in the probable and possible order of things; and it is by portraying incidents in that aspect that one is a poet. A history,moreover,deals not with one action,but with one period,and all that happened in that period to one or more persons,however disconnected the several events may

have been. History,unlike poetry,may deal with events occurring at the same time which have no relationship to each other or which do not converge to the same end,or it may deal with consecutive events having no connection. Poetry is more philosophic and of graver import than history,with a higher subject matter; it expresses, as we have already said,the universal and not the particular,the type and not the individual; and just as the universal is that which many individuals have in common,so the subject of poetry must be the representation of one action the particulars of which are all related to one another,and converge to one end.

Horace,as Grifoli observed in 1552 (1),has exceedingly little to say regarding the epic; his epistle announces principles and laws common to all classes of poetry. He counsels the choice of a subject which will be simple and uniform (line 23),a subject commensurate with the abilities of the poet (38-39). Let him either follow tradition or invent such stories as are congruous. Let the poet aim either to teach or to delight,or both (333-34). Whoever mixes the useful with the amusing is best deserving of praise (343). In speaking of the Odyssey,Horace points out that Homer did not trace the rise of the Trojan War "ab ovo" but started "in medias res",omitting those things which he deemed tiresome,and adroitly mingling the false with the true,he blended beginning,middle,and end,in a harmonious whole (143-52). Homer has shown in what meter the achievements of kings and of war must be written. (2) Let each style have its proper place, that is,let the poet not endeavor to treat a comic subject in tragic verse. He directs the learned "imitator" (317-18) to have a regard to the mode of nature and manners,and copy nature to the life,giving the fiction as much likeness to truth as possible. Lastly,he counsels the perusal of Greek models by day and by night.

(1) "Nam quae pertinent ad Epicos,non plura scripsit" (p.1147).

(2) "Res gestae regumque ducumque et tristia bella
Quo scribi possent numero,monstravit Homerus" (73-74).

Chapter II

The Subject of the Epic

There is a general agreement among sixteenth century critics, regarding the subject of the epic, that it deals with serious subjects in a dignified manner befitting that which, in the opinion of a great number of critics of the time, is the highest form of poetry. Aristotle, it will be recalled, had said that the heroic poem was an imitation of serious subjects such as the noble actions of noble personages, and Horace had referred to the epic as dealing with "res gestae regumque ducumque et tristia bella". There is an intermingling of these two ideas to be found throughout the current of critical theory. Daniello (1536) united the two ideas when he said that the epic describes the most excellent deeds of emperors and of "other magnanimous and valorous men of arms, such as Ulysses and Achilles"(1), and that the great and sublime deeds of such men were the subject matter of the heroic poem.(2) The poet may express, concealed under various names and figures of speech - "marvellous fictions, fabulous veils ('favolosi velami') and allegoric significations ('allegorici sentimenti')"- not only everything that men do, everything understood, recognized, and contemplated, but also truths of God and nature. It is proper for the poet to mingle false and invented happenings with the true, for the poet, unlike the historian, narrates what ought to be. Both historian and poet describe places and situations, people, nations, laws, customs, and habits, but to the poet is accorded the fullest privilege of inventing many things at will, provided that he does not depart too much from describing things as they really are. Paccius, in his translation of Aristotle (1536), merely repeats the simple statement of the Stagirite when he makes the epic the imitation of subjects "praestantia, gravia, & seria". Trissino, in the dedication to Charles V preceding the Italia liberata (1547), seems to feel justified, by an extension of the Horatian idea, in dealing not only with "res gestae"

(1) Cf. p. 34.

(2) Cf. p. 131.

but also with res regum bellorumque, for he states that in the course of the poem he is going to describe "the details of garments, of armor, of palaces, methods of building camps, and beside ordinances and military exercises, many counsels and other things which will be, without any doubt, not only useful for all wars which are to come but also the ornament of some other parts of human life".

Robortelli (1548) in his paraphrase of Horace (1) repeats the Aristotelian idea that the epic is primarily an imitation of a true human action, and adds the Horatian that it deals principally with the deeds of great kings and generals in peace and in war (2); in his commentary on Aristotle he asserts that the epic treats of the deeds of heroes. (3) Bernardo Segni (1549) translates the passage of Aristotle above referred to as follows: "Il Poema Heroico ... imita l'attioni virtuose". (4) In his commentary of this passage, however, he speaks of the imitation of excellent actions (attioni eccellenti). There is room for hesitation as to the translation of "virtuose", but in view of the fact that he uses the word in the sense of "virtuous" elsewhere, we seem to be justified in so interpreting it here. (5) This idea of the epic dealing with virtuous actions, inherently Aristotelian, we find reiterated later by Trissino, Giraldi Cinthio, and with less stress by Castelvetro. Madius (1550) translating the same passage, states that the epic deals with splendid deeds of illustrious men ("praeclara illustrium virorum gesta"). (6) In his commentary on Horace's "Atque ita

(1) Cf. p. 17.
(2) Cf. p. 5.
(3) Cf. p. 7.
(4) Cf. p. 289.
(5) On page 284 we find the following: "Et infra i Poeti antichi alcuni d'essi furon'detti Poeti Heroici, & alcuni Poeti Iambici. Ma cosi come Homero infra tutti gli altri imitò massimamente l'attioni virtuose, perchè egli solo dimostrò non tanto quello, che era buono, ma perchè egli anchora nel suo Poema, fece l'imitationi da representarsi in Scena", (Just as Homer among all the others imitated especially virtuous actions because he alone not only portrayed what was good, but also because in his poem he made the imitations suitable to be presented on the stage); and again (p. 290) "Tragedia è una imitatione d'attione virtuosa, perfetta".

(6) Cf. p. 13.

mentitur sic veris falsa remiscet",he says that Horace,using Homer as an example,urged the poet to mix the false with the true in such a way that they should not be at variance or contradict one another.(1) Muzio,saying in 1551 that the epic is a "picture of the universe" is probably referring to the comprehensiveness of the subject. De Nores (1553),commenting on the "regumque ducumque" passage of Horace,explains that these deeds are either those of kings or of leaders for whose deeds the kings received credit (2),but later (3) includes the imitation of illustrious persons within the scope of the epic,even if other,apparently,than kings and generals.(4)

Up to this point,then,we find a general agreement among all the critics in the opinion regarding the personages of the epic. For Daniello the protagonists of the epic are emperors or valorous men of arms; for Robortelli they are great kings,generals,and heroes; for Madius and De Nores they are illustrious men. There is more variation in the opinions regarding the quality of the actions. Daniello,Paccius,and Madius believed that only great and splendid deeds should find a place in the heroic poem,whereas Segni specifies that the actions should be virtuous. Trissino,combining and amplifying the precepts of Horace regarding the end of poetry and the subject matter of the epic,states that there is justification for a detailed description of garments,armor,etc. In Daniello and Madius we see expressed for the first time the Aristotelian idea that poetry,narrating primarily true facts,may also describe false or feigned happenings,provided that a semblance of truth be maintained. With the exception of Trissino's mention of details,nothing strikingly original has been advanced; the various comments have

(1) Cf.p.347.
(2) Cf.p.1214.
(3) Cf.p.1225.
(4) Dekores gives a definition of"hero". " Heroes are lower than the condition of the gods and higher than the nature of men,or,in other words,midway between a man and a god"(p.1252). The passage is as follows: "Heroicae enim personae in fabulis introducantur: Heroes autem sunt infra deorum conditionem & supra hominum naturam: medij inter hominem & deum,ut apud Aristotelem in moralibus licet conijcere: ubi de heroica virtute loquitur".

been,in the main points,rather slavishly Aristotelian or Horatian.

Benedetto Varchi in his Lezzioni della Poetica (1553) states the question somewhat differently,although in substance he agrees with those whom we have just discussed. He gives the same definition of 'hero' as De Nores,he agrees with the others as to the quality of the personages and their acts. He speaks of those called epic poets by the Greeks,that is," makers (facitori) by means of words or verses,or imitators with speech (sermone),and called by the Romans heroic poets because they speak ordinarily of kings,of princes,of valorous men,and of other illustrious persons who are called by the Latins (but after the Greek fashion) heroes,or demigods,because being more than men on account of their virtue,and less than gods on account of being mortal,they attain such a name as it were midway between the two".(1) The heroic poets represent the actions of great (grandi) men either in the quiet of peace or in the turmoil of war,"although war seems more adapted and proper to the subject,furnishing as it does matter more honorable,praiseworthy,profitable,and assuredly more ample,lofty,and pleasing".

Giraldi Cinthio (1554) develops the idea already followed by Bernardo Segni that virtuous deeds are the only suitable ones for the epic. Speaking of poets dealing with vice and debasing subjects,Giraldi believes that although such passages can be found in Homer,they are the fault of the times and not of the poet. "The singular virtues which are found in this divine poet make tolerable these things in him"(2),but in Trissino,he continues,such faults are inexcusable. The office of the poet,he asserts,is to praise virtuous actions and blame vices. Despite the fact that he says that virtuous deeds are alone suitable to the epic,he asserts (3) that "there can be introduced into the compositions loves,unexpected

(1) Cf.p.616.
(2) Cf.p.33.
(3) Cf.p.43.

events,wrongs,vices,offenses,defences,deceits,treachery,and such other episodes that the poem will become most pleasing". The only way that wrongs,vices,deceits,and treachery could make the poem "most pleasing" is that these evils would not triumph but would receive their just punishment in the poem,and it is not necessary, accordingly,to see in this statement any contradiction of the assertions already made. Giraldi is giving one of his thrusts at Trissino when he says (1) that a poet ought not to include in his work the description of fortifications and ordinances of armies,because they rightly belong to history and not to poetry,which presupposes such things. Nor ought the poet describe the buildings in the manner of an architect,for,by describing too minutely the things pertaining to such arts,he sacrifices that which is suitable to poetry. Moreover,these descriptions of mechanical things carry with them a certain baseness (viltà) and are far removed both from the use and from the greatness of the heroic poem. The "energia" or vigor in a poet does not consist (as Trissino believed) in minutely describing each trifle whenever the poet writes in a heroic manner,but indescribing the things which are worthy of the greatness of the matter. The Greeks and the Latins described the illustrious deeds of brave knights ("illustri & chiari fatti de i Cavalieri forti".(2) In the Romanzi,which,to Giraldi's mind,are the corresponding form of the Italian to the heroic poem of the Greek and the Latin,the subject is drawn from invention.(3) It seems manifest that the good authors who have written Romanzi in Italian,he continues,have invented the subject matter almost in its entirety. It can be doubted if it is permitted to adhere to an antique subject,and he adds that novelty of subject without any doubt carries with it much pleasure and delight,on the principle already stated by Aristotle that more enjoyment is derived from that which is unknown.(4) Sperone Speroni,

(1) Cf.pp.61ff.
(2) Cf.p.5.
(3) Cf.p.10.
(4) Cf.p.12.

however,opposing (1) the contentions of Giraldi on this point,believes that it is absurd to say that the Romanzi treat only of modern knights and not of Greeks,Latins,or barbarians.

In Giraldi Cinthio we find the question of subject amplified to a great extent. Giraldi,writing in direct opposition to all of Trissino's beliefs,seems to agree with him in only one point, that the poet should praise virtuous actions and blame vices. He finds Trissino's detailed descriptions reprehensible from an artistic viewpoint. Giraldi,holding a brief for the Romanzi,does not believe that the precepts of Aristotle and Horace or the example of Homer and Virgil are the standards by which the Romanzi can be judged,although he considers these poems the form in Italian corresponding to the heroic poem of the Greek and the Latin. That he recognized Aristotelian precepts to a certain degree is evident,however,from the fact that he follows the Stagirite in the statement that pleasure is afforded by the unknown and invented material in that we all tell a story with additions to add to the pleasure of our hearers.

Lionardi (1554) contends (2) that he who is not a good historian cannot be a good poet. He recognizes,however,the difference between the two when he states that the poet may not only depart from the direct order of history but narrate the true under a fictitious cover,and that a poet is in reality the imitator and the dissembler of the true ("fingitore et imitatore del vero".(3) Luisinus (1554) expresses practically the same idea. The poet must tell lies and invent as Homer did,but must be consistent in his falsehoods ("sed tamen in mendacijs constare sibi debet"),so that nothing monstrous will result from his fabrications.

Pigna (1554),following Robortelli,says that the epic treats

(1) Cf.p.521.
(2) Cf.p.43.
(3) Cf.p.61.

of the deeds of heroes(1),and elsewhere (2) he speaks of the subject as the acts of divine men ("divini huomini"). Gravity,owing to the fact that the heroic poem deals with great things,is an essential quality of the epic. It is characteristic of the epic,as opposed to the Romanzi,that it either does not introduce at all or introduces very sparingly persons of low condition. In the third book (3)the Horatian idea occurs once more that the epic treats of arms. Capriano,writing in the following year,does not limit the epic to the affairs of war. For him (4) the heroic poem more properly imitates glorious deeds of peace and war,on land and sea, of men most illustrious both by birth and by valor (virtute). Fabricius (1555),in his commentary on Horace,repeats the same idea as that previously voiced by Robortelli and Pigna that " Heroicum Heroum solet res referre".(5) Fabricius recommends that the poet follow that which is "verisimile" and not openly fictitious,because such a procedure produces more delight for the reader.

In the De Poeta of Minturno (1559) we find developed for the first time the idea already grudgingly suggested by Pigna that the epic can treat other than lofty subjects,an idea which we meet later in Scaliger. "For the life of kings is contained in tragedy and that of inferior persons in comedy,but the heroic poem includes both". (6) But Minturno follows the now stereotyped idea that the epic,serious and grave,deals chiefly with the affairs of war.(7) He adds that although heroes and gods have never been seen by us, nevertheless he believes that they are described as they ought to be.(8) "The generals and kings of the ancients",he continues (9),

(1) Cf.p.12.
(2) Cf.p.15.
(3) Cf.p.124.
(4) Cf.Ch.iii.
(5) Cf.p.244.
(6) "Nam Tragoedijs Regum vita,Comoedijs inferiorum continetur. Heroici verò interdum complectuntur" (p.102).
(7) Cf.p.158.
(8) Cf.p.25.
(9) Cf.p.250.

"were heroes" (Nam veterum Duces,Reges; erant Heroes),a definition which is broadened by Scaliger.

Victorius (Vettori) (1560) adds still another adjective to the list by declaring that the epic is an "imitatio gravium & honestarum (honorable) personarum" (1),and elsewhere (2) he translates by " studiosorum (devoted) virorum".

Scaliger (1561) dwells on the comprehensive character of the epic which excels other species of poetry in that it contains all kinds of subjects. (3) Epic poets go to history for their argument.(4) History,either feigned or glorified,and always with changed aspect,is made the basis of epic poetry.(5) "And let it be further said that when poetry describes military counsels,now open and frank,now crafty; when it tells of tempests,of wars,of routs,of various artifices,all is for the same purpose: it imitates, that it may teach". (6) He believes with Trissino in the didactic purpose of historical subjects. We shall discuss this point at greater length later. In Liber III,caput I,he shows that he understands the saying of Aristotle that all poetry represents universal ideas by means of the individual,which history does not. Not only was the didactic purpose present in Scaliger's mind regarding historical themes but also regarding ethical subjects. The epic,he believed,is not necessarily limited to the imitation of virtues,but if vices are sufficiently noteworthy they may also be introduced into the poem,provided,one may suppose,that they furnish an incentive toward well-doing. In Liber III,caput XCVI,which he devotes exclusively to a discussion of the epic,he repeats the idea so

(1) Cf.p.52.
(2) Cf.p.51.
(3) "Quia continet materias universas" (lib.I,cap.III).
(4) "Quis nescit omnibus Epicis Poetis historiam esse pro argumento"? (lib.I,cap.II).
(5) "Quam illi aut adumbratam,aut illustratam,certè alia facie quàm ostendunt,ex historia conficiunt Poema". (ibid).
(6) Lib.I,cap.I.

frequently met heretofore that the epic describes the birth,the life,and the deeds of heroes ("Heroum genus,vita,gesta"). The whole argument is to be sought in civil life.(1) The more important parts among persons are assigned to kings and heroes; gods are introduced,and,among everyday affairs,battles are related." Battles and war,one is disposed to believe,form more than an incidental feature in the epic for Scaliger. Commenting (2) on a passage in Horace,he shows that he regards war as a very important element in the subject: "Epicorum materia declaratur,dux,miles, classis,equus,victoria." For him serious persons are gods,heroes, kings,generals,and citizens.(3) In Scaliger we find reaffirmed the idea of Minturno that the epic may deal with men of the lower classes. Scaliger says expressly (4) that the heroic poem includes both heroes and lesser men ("in quibus Heroes sunt,& alij minutiores"). In Liber III,caput XCVII,Scaliger gives the unmistakable inference that the humble classes are introduced into the epic. "Although tragedy is similar to the epic",he says,"it differs in that it rarely introduces persons of the lower classes (personas viliores), such as messengers,merchants,sailors,and the like". And not only are humble persons introduced,but Scaliger would remove the too servile restrictions regarding the use of certain words which were thought to detract from the dignity and grandeur of the heroic poem. For instance,the word 'gull' was felt to be unsuitable to the majesty of the epic,but Scaliger cannot understand why Virgil admitted the ant or the swallow if he ostracized the gull.(5) It is equally inexplicable to him why Virgil should put his heroes at table but make no mention of the food.(6)

(1) "Totum verò argumentum petitur è vita civili".
(2) Lib.I,cap.XLI.
(3) "Personae graves sunt Dij,Heroes,Reges,Duces,Civitates"(lib.IV, cap.II.
(4)Lib.I,cap.III.
(5) "Praeterea non video quare potius in Heroicum vel formica,vel hirundo,quam mergus admittatur"(lib.IV,cap.XVI).
(6) Lib.IV,caput XVI.

The catholicity of Scaliger's views regarding the character of the personages is striking. Although stating,as many of his predecessors had done,that the epic treats of the deeds of heroes,he amplifies and extends the narrow restrictions which had been tacitly made,and admits people of lesser rank,such as citizens,sailors, merchants,and the like,with the single proviso that the more important parts be assigned to kings and heroes. This is in harmony with his respect for the vastness of the epic,which includes all the subjects of poetry.

Bernardo Tasso (1562) observes,as had Robortelli,Pigna,and Scaliger before him,that the epic is that species of poetry in which the admirable deeds ("egregi fatti") of heroes are treated.(1) Inasmuch as he defines neither "admirable" nor "hero",his contribution is negligible.

Trissino,in the fifth book of his Arte Poetica (1563),paraphrases Aristotle by saying that the epic imitates notable actions of excellent (prestanti) men. He has little patience with Ariosto and Boiardo,who,like Boccaccio in his Decameron, imitated many "lascivious and bad customs".(2) Here we might see an echo of Bernardo Segni's "attioni virtuose",but it is probable that Trissino derived the idea direct from Aristotle whom he seems,in the main, to have understood.

In the Arte Poetica (1564) Minturno amplifies the idea already tersely expressed in his De Poeta (1559) that minor persons can be introduced into the heroic poem. "Although the epic and tragedy are properly the imitation of the better (migliori) and of great persons,the comic and satiric of the worse and minor persons,nevertheless in each of these species of poetry the imitation of various kinds of persons is found. In the Odyssey,Homer describes the

(1) Cf.p.5.
(2) Cf.p.118.

better class of men,but he also introduces demigods (semidei), servants,maid-servants,and peasants.(1) Minturno,condemning the Romanzi,states that epic imitation is based on true facts, whereas the writers of Romanzi,without regard to verity,invent those things which never happen.

Castelvetro (1570) declares that the subject and matter of poetry in general cannot be anything else than human actions (2), but the plot (3) of the epic and of tragedy ought not to contain simply human actions,but also the magnificent (magnifica) and the kingly (reale). And if the epic contains kingly actions it follows that it contains an action which really happened ("attione avenuta & certa"),and of a king who has really lived and is known, because we cannot imagine a king who has not lived or attribute to him any action; and when he has lived,and it is known that he has,we cannot attribute actions to him which have not really happened.(4) On the other hand,uncertain things ("cose incerte") belong to the matter of poetry according to Aristotle,and they ought to be narrated as certain and as having really happened, without showing that they are imagined.(5) By "cose incerte" it seems evident that Castelvetro means the secret thoughts of the personages which,although a legitimate part of the plot,could not be said to have historical truth. Castelvetro states the matter clearly (6):" The invention or subject is divided into things visible and things invisible",and he explains that by invisible things he means those happenings which do not occur under the eyes of the beholder,as,for example,the inward thoughts of the personages. He concludes,however (7),that the things which are uncertain and which

(1) Cf.p.5.
(2) Cf.p.37.
(3) I translate the word "favola" by "plot". Castelvetro,defining it,says:"La favola,come dice Aristotele,è la constitutione delle cose,cio è,come io interpreto,la 'nventione delle cose,o il soggetto" (p.144).
(4) Cf.p.188.
(5) Cf.p.210.
(6) Cf.p.144.
(7) Cf.p.211.

did not occur do not suffice as subject ~~as subject~~ and that the plot of the epic can be constituted only of things happened and known,the royal state on which it is founded requiring this. Castelvetro believes,then,as had Trissino,Scaliger,and Minturno,that the subject of the epic is derived from true history,but that matters not established as historically true may also be included. The epic is the imitation of noble subjects ("rassomiglianza de nobile") (1),and has the advantage of being able to deal not only with men and with gods descended from heaven to the earth,but also with gods which remain in heaven without introducing them into this world. Furthermore,it treats not only the apparent actions of men and gods,but it also treats those which are not apparent,such as their secret thoughts,etc.(2)

In his Chiose intorno il terzo libro del Comune di Platone (3) Castelvetro asserts that the poet can say in the epic what he desires in general terms without offending the listener,but may relate only the good. In the same work (4),commenting on the words of Plato,"Priscorumque virorum virtute praestantium",he writes that the heroic poets do not of necessity relate the virtues (virtù) of great men. What virtue is it for Paris to lead Helen away and for the Trojans to defend such a deed? But the epic poets relate the actions of the ancient kings,whoever they may have been,because they are worthy of being remembered.

One is justified,then,according to Castelvetro,in introducing the deeds and the thoughts of gods into the plot under the guise of probability or possibility without offending the feeling for historical truth. The poet,giving to the narration a character of universality which permits the introduction of the element of fiction based on credibility and verisimilitude,will have suffi-

(1) Cf.p.107.
(2) Cf.p.697.
(3) Cf.Opere varie critiche,p.216.
(4) Ibid.,p.255.

cient justification for the introduction of gods into the epic, when the fact that the deeds of demigods are the recognized matter of the heroic poem,and when the additional fact is considered that after the gods were invested with a mortal form,they were portrayed as displaying all the foibles and weaknesses of the flesh,thereby losing to a great degree their supernatural character. It is manifest that if he admits the deeds of gods,it is but a step for Castelvetro to include their thoughts. The apparent contradiction in the two statements from the Opere varie critiche regarding the portrayal of virtuous deeds in the heroic poem can be explained by the fact that Castelvetro contends that virtuous deeds should always be represented in the poem,and he would impose on the epic writer the necessity of adhering to such a practice,yet,just a Giraldi had excused Homer for the violation of this precept on the plea that the fault was of the times and not of the poet,so would Castelvetro excuse the portrayal of the actions of the ancient kings in the classic epics,even if other than virtuous,on the ground that the latter poems are in a class by themselves.

From what has been said it will be seen that the sayings of Aristotle and Horace that epic poetry is a mode of imitation representing serious subjects in a grand manner are accepted by all the writers who have been mentioned. Many of the critics express a concept of the comprehensiveness and the all-inclusive character of the heroic poem. Muzio in stating that the epic is a picture of the universe,Scaliger in recognizing the catholicity of subject,Daniello in admitting not only the deeds of men but the truths of God and nature,show that they felt the vastness of such a poem. The other sayings of the two great authorities have given rise to various interpretations,and to a difference in the emphasis laid on one expression rather than on another. Most of the critics are bent not on giving accurate or complete definitions of the epic,but ondescribing it superficially or em-

phasizing certain parts or characters of its subject. The matters that most of them discuss are as follows: 1. the kind of personages who are to be protagonists of the epic; 2. the character of the deeds of these personages,which form the subject of the poem: whether they should be deeds of war or of both peace and war; whether virtuous or other than virtuous; 3. whether the subject of the poem should be fact or fiction or both; 4. what are especially suitable details which find their place naturally in the epic.

1. As to the kind of personages who should be the protagonists, it will be remembered that Aristotle had said that epic poetry is a mode of imitation representing serious subjects such as the noble actions of noble personages,or at least of personages better than ordinary men. There is much latitude in this saying,for the only classes of persons barred are ordinary men and their inferiors. However,the emphasis is on "noble" persons,but here again nobility may be understood in more than one sense,and although Aristotle seems clearly to mean nobility of character,some of our critics seem to have lost sight of this implication. On the other hand, Horace had spoken of the personages of Homer as kings and leaders, and had mentioned wars in the same breath,an expression which seems to suggest a military qualification as the most suitable,and some of our writers have evidently been strongly influenced by this suggestion. The examples of the Iliad,the Odyssey,and the Aeneid are sufficient to account for every kind of protagonist which does not seem to be directly indicated by the two great authorities - every kind except those implicitly favored by Giraldi,who is the devoted admirer of Ariosto.

The word "hero" is used for the protagonists by Robortelli, De Nores,Varchi,Pigna,Fabricius,Scaliger,Bernardo Tasso,and three of these define "hero" as meaning a demigod. Gods are mentioned by Scaliger and Castelvetro;sovereigns(kings and emperors) by Daniello,Robortelli,DeNores,and Minturno. Men of arms are mentioned

by Daniello,Robortelli,and Giraldi (the latter using the word "cavalieri" to include the heroes of the Italian Romanzi). Others are willing to admit all great,illustrious,excellent,or honorable men; such are Madius,De Nores,Varchi,Capriano,Vettori,Trissino. Especially noteworthy are Minturno and Scaliger,who admit even inferior persons. Here it would seem at first sight as though Scaliger were departing from the teaching of Aristotle,who had said that the epic should deal with the actions of better men than the ordinary,but he probably considered that the "better men" were meant to be the protagonists, without intending to exclude all inferiors from even passing mention. And as Aristotle himself had said that inferior persons might express and embody nobility and goodness,he would probably have countenanced their admission into the epic in the degree that they manifested this nobility of character.

2. The idea derived from Horace,that deeds of arms should be the subject of the epic,is expressed by Pigna and implied by Daniello,and that they should be a chief part of the subject is declared by Varchi and Minturno,and implied by Trissino,Giraldi,and Scaliger. Capriano,Varchi,and the all-embracing Scaliger,however, mentions actions of both peace and war,and that both kinds should be admitted is also implied by Castelvetro.

Aristotle had emphasized the moral quality of the actions portrayed by the epic,but this preoccupation reappears in only a few of our authors other than the commentators. The adjectives that most of them use to describe the actions suitable for epic narration (excellent,sublime,illustrious,glorious,admirable,notable, magnificent,kingly,etc.,) have no more than the obvious significance. Segni,however,specifies virtuous actions,and Giraldi and Trissino take pains to condemn the use of vicious actions. Trissino is criticizing the lascivious parts of the works of Boiardo and Ariosto,but Giraldi notes the shortcomings of Homer too in this matter,and ascribes them to the times rather than to the poet. A similar compromise between precept and practice has been noted in

Castelvetro,who,after saying that only the good should be related, observes that the classical models are not blameless in this respect,but are excusable because they describe the deeds of ancient kings whose actions (even the non-virtuous) are memorable. This question has much to do with the didactic purpose ascribed to the epic - Scaliger,for instance - and will have to be considered again in the chapter on the purpose of the epic.

3. It is a profound observation of Aristotle that the substance of epic poetry is fiction founded on fact. It is the story of the past reconstructed by the imagination of the poet. The imagination,as he explains in the De Anima,is the intermediary between knowledge of universal ideas on the one hand,and perception and memory of particulars on the other. All poetry is idealization because it applies knowledge of universals to perception and memory of particulars. It does this by means of the imagination. The difference between the poet and the historian,according to Aristotle,is that the former deals with universals and the latter with particulars. The latter writes from memory,the former from imagination. It follows that epic poetry,which is the poetical story of the past,uses history as its material,but transforms it, idealizing it. The improbable and even the impossible become credible when they are idealized representations of fact,when,that is,they are so presented as to be imaginably credible.

This great conception was,it seems,only vaguely comprehended by sixteenth century writers,and often not at all. Daniello,apparently considering that the saying that poetry expresses the universal meant only that it is all-embracing,concludes that the subject of epic poetry is fact and fiction (the fiction either allegorical or symbolical of everything under the sun) and the truths of God and nature besides - this without explaining the relation between fact and fiction. His ideas are vague or at least vaguely expressed,but his mention of allegory seems to show that he still holds something of the medieval beliefs that the works of

the classic poets were allegories,and this is probably what Lionardi means when he speaks of narrating the true under a fictitious cover. Horace had simply said that fact and fiction should be adroitly mixed,and Madius is content with repeating that statement,while Robortelli makes the reservation that the action should be chiefly true. Giraldi was mistakenly preoccupied with the Aristotelian distinction between poetry and history when he objected to the use of minute particulars,saying that they belonged properly to history. He is boldly original,however,where he declares for fiction as the most suitable subject matter,although even here he appeals for support to Aristotle's approval of the marvellous. Castelvetro, laboring to reconcile his conviction that the true epic material is historical fact with the teaching of Aristotle that the imagination has much to do with epic poetry,solved the difficulty by making invention a secondary matter,the hand-maiden of historical narration. The events related must be true and important,but imagination may be used to supply what history cannot know,that is, the "invisible things",the thoughts and feelings of the heroes. It was an ingenious solution but a poor interpretation of Aristotle.

Only two of our writers seem to have understood their chief authority. Minturno says that fiction must be based on fact,and condemns the Italian Romanzi,which Giraldi so admired,because they are mere fiction with no basis of fact. This,as far as it goes, is sound Aristotelian doctrine,but it is Scaliger who expounds that doctrine most clearly,for he has a correct interpretation of the relation between epic poetry and history. History,he says,is the material of the epic,which the latter transforms,idealizing it. Accordingly,the subject of the epic is neither mere fact or mere fiction,nor is it fact supported by fictitious details,but historical fact idealized. He understands that the epic should not despise details but that it should represent the universal by means of the particular. For Scaliger,all human life is the fit subject of the epic; the lives of heroes ("genus,vita,gesta") are naturally

more important than those of inferior individuals,but there is no reason why persons of every rank should not find their place in the poem,and no reason why everyday matters such as food and drink should not also be represented,idealized as they must be.

4. Trissino,the pedantic admirer of everything ancient,careless of theoretical questions regarding the subject of the epic, lingers lovingly over certain details which he regards as characteristically suitable to the heroic poem: garments,arms,palaces,etc., methods of building camps,military arrangements and exercises. The reason for his fondness for these things is probably his unstinted admiration of Homer,but the reasons he gives are their didactic and aesthetic value. Scaliger,too,mentions military counsels,tempests, wars,routs,and various artifices,but only to ascribe a didactic value to them. Giraldi,on the other hand,condemns technical virtuosities of description on the mistaken ground that they are particulars only suitable to history. Admiring Ariosto as he did, he could hardly object to detailed descriptions of "garments,arms, and palaces",and his objection seems to have been based on a sound aesthetic dislike for technical disquisitions,which he would have condemned in Homer or Virgil as well as in a modern author.

Of all the writers who discuss the subject of the epic, Giraldi is the most original,guided as he is and tempted to unorthodoxy by his own literary taste. Scaliger is the most intelligent interpreter of Aristotle,seconded by Minturno; Castelvetro is the most ingenious critic and the most obscure; Trissino's scanty contribution is interesting because characteristic. The fragmentary utterances of the rest are inconclusive and unenlightening.

Chapter III

The Purpose of the Epic.

There are two theories regarding the purpose or the end of poetry which enter into the discussion of the epic,two theories which were debated even before Aristotle's time in Greece,namely whether poetry was written to delight or to teach. Aristotle, although he did not cast aside completely the latter view,stresses and emphasizes the aesthetic purpose; Horace believed in the two-fold purpose of poetry. Daniello (1536) calls attention to the fact that Plato had condemned poets for introducing bad customs and for narrating false things concerning the gods and attributing to them unworthy actions. The true office of the poet,asserts Daniello,is to teach men the right method of living (1),and,what is more (2) to teach them to discern false things from the true, although he admits (3) that this is more properly the province of the philosopher than of the poet. He employs the Platonic simile of the doctor to explain his meaning. "Just as the discreet and learned doctor,to restore health to the weak and sickly bodies of others,is accustomed oftentimes to veil his medicine under a slight covering of sweetness to deceive the taste, so does the poet conceal under various fictions and fabulous veils ('favolosi velami') some useful teaching to delight the ear of the listener"(4) Poetry is a reprehension of vices and the praise of things well done (5),which studies to move the sentiments; but although he has stressed the didactic side of poetry,Daniello concludes with the Horatian view (6) that the end of poetry is equally to teach and to delight.

Trissino's ideas regarding the end of poetry were Aristot-

(1) Cf.p.14.
(2) Cf.p.17.
(3) Cf.p.18.
(4) Cf.p.19.
(5) Cf.p.42.
(6) Cf.p.25.

elian in the main,but were given an Horatian turn in the dedication to Charles V (1547),which we have already cited in connection with the subject of the epic. The didactic purpose was evidently uppermost in Trissino's mind. "And your Majesty,you will find there (that is,in the Italia liberata) beside the ordinances and the military exercise which the ancients used,many counsels and other things which will be,without any doubt,not only useful in all wars to come,but also the ornament of some other parts of human life". Poetry,according to the idea of Trissino,should be replete with moral exhortations as to proper conduct.

Robortelli (1548),apparently commending Plato's censure of Homer for having portrayed the gods as licentious and murderous, says that he thinks that Aristotle does not agree with Plato,but that Aristotle himself admitted into the poem those things,which, although absurd had been commonly accepted regarding the gods. (1) In Robortelli's paraphrase of Horace he observes that the poet should,when describing a particular person,have in mind the general exemplar so that he may aptly and shrewdly imitate the nature of life and customs.(2)

It is not within the province of this monograph to discuss the Aristotelian theory of katharsis or purgation of the emotions of pity and fear. We have seen that recent commentators are not in agreement as to whether katharsis is a function to be ascribed to the epic as well as to tragedy,although it is probable that there was no distinction in Aristotle's mind. Robortelli believes that the purgation is limited to tragedy,and that the same emotional effect is not attained by narration (3) such as that of the heroic poem,a view likewise held by Madius in 1550. Bernardo Segni (1549)

(1) "Aristoteles igitur (opinor) respiciens as sententiam Platonis, clàm ipsam refellere conatur,sentit enim ipse,ea,quae de Diis semel in opinionem hominum recepta sunt,etiam si absurda" (p.297).
(2) Cf.p.17.
(3) "Non per narrationem . Hoc additum est,ut separaret tragoediam ab epopoeia" (p.52).

does not make any such distinction. He speaks expressly of the "purgation which is born in our minds by means of the heroic poem and the tragic".(1) Tragedy purges the affections not by means of narration (as does the heroic poem) but by way of pity and fear, that is,by representing to us the actors.(2) "But what does the 'Filosofo' mean by 'purging the affections'?" Segni asks,and replies to his own query that he means that "in considering similar imitations where terrible and pitiable things occur,that we purge our minds"; but he does not pretend to know in what manner this takes place.

Varchi (1553) believes that events should be narrated so that not only the greatest usefulness can be brought to human life, but also the greatest delight and admiration to men.(3) Poets are not only to teach but to delight and move (4),and to attain this result eloquence is necessary. One would be disposed to interpret the word "move" in the sense of stirring the emotions,with consequent purification,if it were not that Varchi categorically denies this function to the epic. "Let us conclude then finally",he says, "that that which,either profitable or delightful,is desired by a noble mind and generous spirit in this life,is to be found in poetry". (5) Varchi shares the opinion of Robortelli and Madius that the epic does not induce the purgation of the mind by means of pity and fear.

Lionardi (1554) ,with no mention of the didactic purpose, asserts that the poet should delight and please.

Giraldi Cinthio (1554) believes that every good poet should teach men an upright life and good customs (6) (a condition which Ariosto and Boiardo have fulfilled adding the element of pleasure, thus making their works good and praiseworthy).(7) The poet,then,

(1) Cf.p.274.
(2) Cf.p.290.
(3) Cf.p.617.
(4) "Ma a dilettare ancora,e à muovere"(p.631).
(5) Cf.p.632.
(6) Cf.p.8.
(7) Cf.p.10.

should not only teach but he should accompany the useful with delight. He accepts without question the Horatian idea of the twofold end of poetry.(1) Giraldi agrees with Segni in believing that the heroic poem as well as tragedy purges the mind by pity and fear,and awakens it to virtue. The office of the poet,then, is to praise virtuous actions and blame the vices,and,although seeming elsewhere to have understood the Aristotelian theory of katharsis,he concludes here with a curious distortion of the idea of the Stagirite,"and with the terrible and wretched,cause the reader to hold them (that is,the vices) in contempt".(2)

Capriano (1555) considers poetry the most useful means of instructing the mind,for it admonishes,now with one sort of action now with another,towards true,good,and happy living.(3) He judges the most excellent imitation to be that which brings, beside delight,the greatest usefulness to the different states and conditions of our life,by describing good actions and making us abhor vice and its causes,teaching us to be moderate in all things.(4) Capriano,like Segni and Giraldi,considers the epic as having subjects inspiring pity and fear.(5)

Grifoli in his commentary and Fracastoro in his Naugerius (1555),following Horace's precepts,state that the end of poetry consists in giving delight and also in being useful,but they contribute nothing original to the discussion.

Minturno in the De Poeta (1559) believes that the poet ought to teach and move his hearer as well as delight and lead him to a state of admiration.(6) Minturno,it will be noticed,unites

(1) In a letter to Bernardo Tasso of October 10,1557,he says:"Parendomi che in questo modo potessi essequire il precetto d'Horatio,il quale ci invita à mescolare con decoro convenevole,l'utile col dolce". (Porcacchi,p.438.)
(2) "& col terribile & col miserabile porgli in odio a chi lui legge" (p.59).
(3) Cf.Cap.II.
(4) Cf.Cap.III.
(5) Cf.Cap.IV.
(6) Cf.p.5.

the word "move" to the words "teach" and "delight" and speaks always of this three-fold relation."ut doceat,ut delectet,ut moveat",an expression which Varchi had employed in substance six years before. One is disposed here to interpret the word "move" as a recognition of the "pity and fear" element in heroic poetry,for Minturno,unlike Varchi,explicitly declares (1) that the epic purifies through the operation of pity and fear.(2)

Parthenio (1560),in the Della Imitatione Poetica,repeats the Horatian idea under a slightly amplified form. The end of poetry, he writes,is the expression of human actions; the instruction or information of the mind is the subject or matter of poetry,and the manner in which the writer treats the subject should be pleasurable and delightful. This is merely a restatement of the constantly recurring idea,combined with an attempt at arrangement so cherished by some of the critics of this period.

Scaliger (1561) states that the purpose of poetry is to give instruction in pleasurable form ("docendi cum delectatione"),for poetry teaches and does not simply amuse,as some used to think. (3) We have,in discussing the subject of the epic,already cited the passage showing that Scaliger's idea was that poetry's main end is to teach. "Adhaec ubi narrat Imperatorum consilia tum aperta,tum vafra,praeterea tempestates,bella,fugas,artes varias,aequem omnia ad eundem finem: iccirco imitatur,ut doceat".(4) The poet is not necessarily limited to the imitation of virtues and good fortune, but if the vices are noteworthy they may also be introduced into the poem.(5) Poetry is rendered more thoughtful by plots appropriate to furnish warning examples and by sentiments suitable to furnish precepts. (6) "Horace most aptly said: 'He carries every

(1) Cf.p.63.
(2) "Nam ut Epica,sic Tragica poesis id sibi potissimum proponit, ut miseratione captanda,incutiendoq; terrore,animum à pertabationibus expiet".
(3)"Nanque Poeta etiam docet,non solum delectat,ut quidam arbitrabantur" (lib.I,cap.I).
(4) Cf.lib.I,cap.I.
(5) "Ex his explicare multa variaque,sed illustria omnia exempla, vel virtutum,vel vitiorum,vel fornae"(sic) (lib.III,cap.XXIII).
(6) Cf.lib.III,cap.XV.

vote who mingles the useful with the pleasing'; for poetry bends all its energies to these two ends,to teach and to please".(1) Scaliger's idea,then,is that the principal function of poetry is didactic,but it should,with that end,be expressed in a pleasurable manner.

In a letter to Varchi of the 6th of March,1559,Bernardo Tasso writes that the poet ought to pay special attention to delight and "especially in this corrupt century,devoted completely to pleasure, in which nothing seems beautiful except that which delights"; and he firmly believes that delight cannot be separated from the useful.(2)

Fabricius(1565) defines the terms "pleasing" and "useful". "Poetry is pleasing because it delights by being neither too prolix nor incapable of being remembered,with an appearance of truth, so as not to be patently fictitious. The useful is that which stimulates men's minds by doctrine and knowledge".(3)

Minturno in his later work condemns Ariosto for not knowing better than to follow the abuses of the Romanzi to please the many, an idea directly opposed to that of Castelvetro who contended that poetry was for the people as a whole.

Castelvetro (1570) states (4) that the sciences and the arts cannot be the subject of poetry because poetry was written only to afford delight and recreation to the minds of the common people, who do not understand the reasoning of philosophers. If we grant that the matter of the sciences and the arts can be the subject of poetry,we shall have to concede either that the primary purpose of poetry is not to delight or that it was not created for the common people,but that its end is to teach. Castelvetro categorically

(1)Cf.lib.III,cap.XXV.
(2) "Non possa essere la dilettatione separata da l'utile".(Porcacchi,p.445).
(3) "Finis poëticae est,ut scribantur iucunda & utilia. Jucundum est,quod delectat,nempe quod non nimis prolixum,quodve memoria teneri potest: item quod verisimile,& non planè fictitium. Utile est,quod animos incitat doctrina & sapientia" (p.708).
(4) Cf.p.29.

asserts,however,that poetry is written primarily for the delight of the multitude and not for the learned.(1) Castelvetro does not believe(2) that Aristotle thought that the epic had not,or could not have,a subject inspiring pity and fear (3),although he admits that it can be said that the epic does not necessarily have such an end.(4) The idea of Castelvetro is diametrically opposed to that of Scaliger in that he believes that poetry is primarily a delight.

As was said at the outset of this chapter,two views were held in Greece regarding the purpose of poetry. The traditional theory,which was widely accepted,was that poetry has a direct moral purpose with didactic intent; Homer was considered not so much an inspired poet as a great teacher. Aristotle first formulated the other theory that poetry aims to produce in the hearer an emotional delight,a purely subjective pleasure,with a strictly aesthetic end. In a passage in the Metaphysics Aristotle states that the discoverers of the fine arts are "wiser than the discoverers of the useful arts for the reason that the former arts minister to pleasure,not to use. Aristotle,as Professor Butcher points out (5),was the first to attempt a separation of the theory of aesthetics from that of morals. In maintaining as he does throughout the Poetics that the end of poetry is a refined pleasure,he separates himself from those who believe in a didactic purpose,but he does not altogether cast aside this latter viewpoint. As regards the delineation of character,Aristotle is on the border-land between morals and aesthetics. The aesthetic representation of character he regards from an ethical viewpoint and the different types of character he re-

(1) Cf.p.679.
(2) Cf.p.276.
(3) "Non mi posso imaginare,che egli havesse opinione,che l'epopea non havesse,o non potesse havere soggetto spaventevole,o compassionevole".
(4) Cf.p.527.
(5) Cf. Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art,p.234.

duces to moral categories; but he never permits the moral purpose of the poet or the moral effects of his art to supplant the artistic and pleasurable end. To the degree that the poet fails to produce the proper pleasure,to that degree does he fail in the accomplishment of his artistic purpose. To Plato,considering the influence of poetry on the formation of character,pleasure was a word of base association. He saw,for instance,in the stories of the gods only reprehensible,immoral fictions,which were harmful in their effect on the readers. Aristotle,answering this contention, maintained that inasmuch as these stories had become traditional, they should be allowed their place in poetry. It should not be believed that,as a consequence of this idea, Aristotle was indifferent to the moral content of a poem. On the contrary,he stated clearly that the characters should be good,but we can be sure that their goodness was not to serve as an example; he advocated that they be good because he realized that the desired pleasure could not be derived from a poem which holds up low ideals of life and conduct. Furthermore,when Aristotle says that "there will be an element of character in the poem,if what a personage says or does reveals a certain moral purpose; and a good element of character,if the purpose so revealed is good"(1),he is not speaking,as I understand it,of the broader question of the purpose of the poem,but only of the purpose or aim of the character which is revealed during the course of the development of the plot. One is justified in concluding,then,that Aristotle advocated that the personages in the epic be depicted as of noble character not primarily from any idea of didactic purpose in their portrayal as such, but in conformity with the unquestioned assumption of his time that the chief distinction between a higher and a lower form of art depended on the different types of moral character represented by it. Accordingly,the epic,being one of the higher forms,would naturally require that the characters be of a lofty type of moral goodness.

(1) Bywater,Aristotle on the Art of Poetry,p.43.

As Professor Butcher points out,Aristotle in the Poetics writes as the literary critic and the historian of poetry. His inquiry is into the different forms of poetry - the origin,the growth,the laws of their structure. He analyzes the poems as he would the forms of thought. He seeks to discover their constitution and how they produce their distinctive effects. The didactic point of view is abandoned; he does not mention the ethical influence on the spectator or the moral intention of the poet. In a word,the question of morality enters into consideration,for Aristotle,only as implied in the aesthetic ideal.

This conception of Aristotle was not perceived by the sixteenth century critics. Those who considered the question of nobility of character at all were of the opinion that if a heroic poem portrayed good men,it was that the goodness should furnish worthy examples for emulation,and therefore they thought they discerned an implied tendency toward a didactic purpose. It is highly probable that in this conception the influence of Plato,who admitted poetry into his commonwealth only so far as it is subsidiary to moral and political education,played a considerable part; and inasmuch as Aristotle nowhere openly refutes the latter's position, but is satisfied with a tacit disagreement,this distinction escaped the minds of the sixteenth century theorists. Daniello,for instance, was plainly under the influence of Plato,whose works were widely read in the sixteenth century. Daniello believed that poetry,praising things well done,is consequently a reprehension of vices,a stimulation to the adoption of a better life. Trissino,too,although slavishly Aristotelian,maintained that poetry should be replete with moral exhortations as to proper conduct. Giraldi and Capriano also believed the office of the poet was to praise virtuous actions.

Three critics,Lionardi,Bernardo Tasso,Castelvetro,stressed the aesthetic purpose of poetry to the exclusion of the didactic. Lionardi gives no reason for his adoption of this position,but

states dogmatically that the poet should delight and please,without specifying who is to be pleased. Tasso is more frank; he believes in conforming to the tastes of his own generation,and as that taste can best be gratified by pleasure,it becomes the imperative duty of the poet to please. It is manifest that this pleasure is entirely different from that of Aristotle. As we have seen, pleasure for Aristotle was an emotional delight. Pleasure for Bernardo Tasso is little else than enjoyment for the many tinged with the Platonic idea of its base association; it is a means to an end,the attainment of popularity. It will be remembered that Minturno had criticized Ariosto for this endeavor to please the many,and by so doing Minturno evinces an understanding of Aristotle on this point which is not shown even by Castelvetro,much less by Tasso. Aristotle in the Ethics expresses contempt for the pleasures of the mass of men,the common people,who,he says,"can form no idea of the noble and the truly pleasant whereof they have never tasted". The audience that is to be pleased is the community of cultivated people, not the masses on the one hand,or the"expert" of Plato on the other. Castelvetro contends that poetry is intended to be a delight and a recreation to the minds of the common people. In this contention Castelvetro is not only opposing absolutely the teaching of Plato, who in the Laws condemned an imitative art for the sole reason that it seeks to please the masses,but he manifestly exceeds the doctrine of Aristotle. Although the Stagirite admits that pleasure is emotional and not intellectual,it is nevertheless a refined pleasure not unlike the glow that results from intellectual speculation; it is thus not the pleasure of the common people but,as has been said,of the classes sufficiently cultured to appreciate a work of art. Of the three critics -Lionardi,Tasso,and Castelvetro - the last is the only one who has anything to say regarding the kind of pleasure,and he seems to have grasped the idea of the Stagirite. Castelvetro would be right in excluding the sciences and the arts from the subject of the poem,for,as has been pointed out,Aristotle

had clearly shown that aesthetic enjoyment arises from an emotional rather than from an intellectual source,with the appeal addressed not to the intellect but to the feelings.

Regarding the question of the emotional appeal of poetry much has been said,but it will not be out of place to discuss briefly the passing reference found in a few of the critics to the Aristotelian theory of katharsis. A great discussion from the sixteenth century to the present day has centered around the meaning of katharsis. Perhaps there is no passage in ancient literature which has been so frequently handled by commentators and critics. The consensus of opinion seems to be that it is a reference to a moral effect which is produced through a purification of the passions. Just what the precise effect is,or how it is brought about,or the particular passions affected,has never been elucidated. We have already shown in our summary of Aristotle that Professor Bywater and Professor Butcher are not in agreement on the question of the admission of the epic into the domain of the operation of katharsis. Opinion was also divided in the sixteenth century. Segni,Capriano,Giraldi Cinthio,Minturno,and Castelvetro,although with a vague idea of the meaning of katharsis,believed that the purgation of the emotions occurred in the epic; Robortelli,Madius, and Varchi held the opposite view. There is apparently no reason against admitting that the same emotional effect takes place in the epic as in tragedy,according to the idea of Aristotle.

We have mentioned those critics who believed in the view that the end of poetry was essentially and exclusively aesthetic; there were others who,although admitting to a small degree the idea of delight,yet stressed the didactic side. Such critics were Daniello,Trissino,Robortelli,Capriano,and Scaliger. Daniello,as we have seen,believed in the moral purpose of poetry. It was not necessary that the reader be cognizant of the fact that there was a didactic purpose,the stimulation to better conduct should be served

as it were in the form of a sugar-coated pill to arouse the unsuspecting reader to a perception of the better life. Daniello is perilously near the border-land between poetry and philosophy,another discussion which does not concern us here. Trissino,with characteristic egotism,announces that his poem was composed with the idea of being useful in all wars to come; the didactic purpose is unquestionably uppermost. Robortelli,in stating that the poet,when describing a particular person,should have in mind the general exemplar,is apparently combining in a curious manner Aristotle's idea of the universality of poetry with the Horatian idea of the "utile". The poet creates a type and that type,being a shrewd imitation of custom,should serve as a model and example. Capriano considers poetry as not only a means,but the most useful means of instructing the mind,for by describing good actions and teaching moderation in all things,the poet admonishes and stimulates the mind towards the attainment of a good and happy life. With Capriano,as with Trissino,although delight is present in his mind,it is merely an accompaniment of the didactic purpose. Scaliger believed that the end of poetry is instruction in a pleasurable form,but he places the greatest emphasis on the didactic side,although he contends also that if vices are sufficiently noteworthy they may have their place in the poem,perhaps with the implication that the representation of such vices would be justified if salutary.

Besides the critics already mentioned,there are others who followed Horace in the statement that the end of poetry is twofold,that is,its office is both to teach and to delight. Those holding this view are Varchi,Giraldi,Grifoli,Fracastoro,Parthenio, and Fabricius. Varchi adds to the Horatian "teach" and "delight" the word "move",so that poetry for him has a three-fold purpose. Just what significance he attached to the last word is problematical. Were he not opposed to the purgation theory one would feel justified in believing that the moving or stirring of the emotions was kathar-

sis. Minturno undoubtedly meant this when he used the same word in the De Poeta. Giraldi,as we would naturally expect from a champion of Ariosto,recognizes the value of the aesthetic element in the poem; that is what makes the works of Boiardo and Ariosto especially praiseworthy. But Giraldi does not stress the pleasurable side; he accepts without question the Horatian idea of the two-fold end of poetry; with delight,a poet should teach men to lead an upright life. The contribution of Grifoli,Fracastoro, Parthenio,and Fabricius is negligible,for they do nothing more than repeat the statement of Horace.

It will be seen,then,that none of the critics has grasped the true conception of Aristotle's thought; almost all show the effect of the prevailing Greek tradition,which was carried over into the Roman world,that the primary office of poetry is to convey ethical teaching. There is everywhere evident,wherever the moral content of the poem is referred to,the tinge of Horatian precepts.

Chapter IV

Unity of the Epic

Very closely allied to the consideration of the choice of subject is that of the question of unity. The discussion of unity may be divided into two main topics: the fundamental and basic idea that the plot should deal with one action,an Aristotelian precept which is generally denominated the "unity of action"; and secondly,the so-called unity of time,derived by critics from the first,and bearing such an intimate relation to it that at times it becomes impossible to separate them,although in this chapter an effort will be made to consider them singly. As a subdivision of the unity of action the question of the introduction of episodes will be treated. The word "episode" is used by the sixteenth century critics in its literal meaning,that is,"a coming in besides". By "episode" is meant a digression or incident outside the plot or main action (generally called the "favola") but related to it, and forming,with the plot,the whole narration or story.

As we have already discussed the dictum of Aristotle and that of Horace,it will be unnecessary to repeat their precepts here. The first writer,accordingly,to be discussed is Vida (1527) who counsels that care should be taken that everything in the work should be disposed in its proper place,and that the end should be in accord with the beginning (1),and,using the Aeneid as a model, recognizes as legitimate the use of episodes,which,by the way,he does not define. Like Aristotle,he considers the Trojan War too large to be treated as a whole.(2) Daniello,following Horace's precepts says: "Let each matter that one elects to treat be simple, that is,single (sola) and let it be so from beginning to end".(3) The vagueness and the generality of these remarks render them unimportant and useless as a contribution to the discussion; Vida is merely repeating the words of Horace and Aristotle,Daniello those of Horace.

(1) Cf.ii,51-55.
(2) Cf.ii,74-77.
(3) Cf.p.35.

Trissino,regarding the question of the unity of action, interprets Aristotle more broadly than many sixteenth century critics. Although in his dedication to Charles V preceding the Italia liberata Trissino says that he intends to treat one and only one of the many actions of Justinian (1) he adds that he purposes to commence at the beginning of the war and finish at the end,or, inother words,he considers the entire war as a unit,the treatment of which finds complete justification in Aristotelian rules. Aristotle commends Homer for not attempting to deal with the Trojan War in its entirety,although it was a whole with a definite beginning and end,and adds that Homer had refrained from so doing through a feeling,apparently,that the story was of too great length to be grasped in one view,or if not that,too complicated from variety of incident in it. Trissino interprets this in such a way as to justify the selection of an entire war as subject,provided that, by so doing,the poem still remain of ordinary length and be not too complicated by variety of incident,and provided that the beginning and the end can still be grasped in one view. The words of Aristotle seem to be capable,however,of the single inference that he considered

(1) "From so many glorious actions,I have selected one and not more, in order not to depart from the laws of poetry,and this is the liberation which he (Justinian) made of Italy from the servitude of the Goths,which I have described,commencing from the beginning of the said action,that is,from the origin of the war,which for such a cause he made with the Goths. And in this I have imitated the divine Homer,who,wishing to describe the wrath of Achilles and the losses which,through this,the Greeks had around Troy,commenced at the beginning and origin of the said wrath and terminated at the end of it. This order I likewise strive to employ in the aforesaid actions of Justinian,commencing,as I have said,from the cause and origin of this war and terminating at the end. Nor only in constructing the plot of a single and great action and which has beginning,middle,and end,have I striven to use the rules of Aristotle... but also,according to his precepts,I have inserted in many places formidable and pitiful actions,and I have placed there recognitions, revolutions,and passions which are the necessary parts of the plot... And although I have not been able to approximate the excellence of such a divine poet (Homer),nevertheless I have attempted to follow him from afar,imitating and adoring his footsteps; seeking as much as was in my power,to be,like him,copious and large; introducing in almost every place persons who speak; and describing sufficiently the details of garments,of armor,of palaces,of methods of building camps,and other things."

any war as a subject too vast for a single poem. That Trissino was fully aware of Aristotle's dictum on this subject seems evident from his words in the sixth division of the Poetica (1):" And in this too Homer appears to have been more wonderful than any other, in not having endeavored to describe the entire Trojan War,although it had beginning,middle,and end,because it would have been a poem and action of immense length,such as would never have been able to be grasped in its entirety,as it now is,being of ordinary length". Trissino seems to hold,however,that a war such as that waged by Justinian may properly become the subject of an epic,since,in his estimation,it is not too long or composed of too varied incidents, though a longer or more complicated war,such as the Trojan War, would not be a fit subject.

Trissino,then,recognizing and insisting on the unity of action,interprets it with such latitude,as we have seen, as to warrant the treatment of an entire war as subject. He lays down no rule regarding unity of time other than to declare that the action should be of "ordinary length",that is,of a length (one is justified in believing) which would not interfere with the unity of action,or rather of a length regulated by the unity of action. He shows that he has understood the precepts of Aristotle,and has likewise partaken of the Stagirite's veneration for the example of Homer,whom Trissino strives to imitate in conformity with his conception of the laws of Aristotle.

Robortelli,in his commentary on Aristotle,repeats the latter's doctrine regarding the organism by saying that the epic embraces a single,perfect,and complete action,and if it be complete in every part like some animal,it is beautiful and affords pleasure. If an author constitutes many actions in the epic,he departs from its proper art,for it ought to be a single,simple action.(2)

(1) Cf.p.113.
(2) Cf.p.320.

In apparent opposition to his last statement,he asserts that a tragic action ought to be simple,but that the epic makes the nature of its action complicated.(1) He undoubtedly has in mind,however, the introduction of episodes and not any complexity of the plot proper,for he maintains (2) that the epic,which is legitimately increased by episodes,is longer than tragedy because it includes more episodes. He seems to use the word "actio" in the sense that Minturno employs the word "narratio" or story,as is more evident in the following passage:" In the epic many parts of an action are completed at the same time; episodes are parts of the action,and each one has a perfect and complete action in itself(3), yet the epic as a whole seems to be a single action.(4) Some, ignorant of the reason (rationem) and the art (artificium) of the heroic poem,have followed all the deeds of one man which were either accomplished at one time or in the space of many years; the action in such a poem is not one,but becomes manifold (multiplicem) and diverse.(5) Such a poem is not to be condemned from the point of view of length of time,because,in his opinion,in its imitation the epic may legitimately embrace matters covering not only a day and night but many days,months,and years; it would be condemned only as offending the unity of action.

Robortelli,in declaring that the action of the epic should be one and yet that the episodes are part of the action,which,as a result of the introduction of episodes,becomes manifold,is apparently contradicting himself,for one is justified in asking whether,if the episodes are a part of the action,they are not really,in the opinion of Robortelli,part of the plot or main action. The explanation lies in the fact that Robortelli,failing to define

(1) "Epopoeia constitutionem suae actionis facit multiplicem",p.215.
(2) Cf.p.206.
(3) "Episodia partes actionis sunt; & singula actionem per se perfectam,integramque habent".
(4) Cf.p.320.
(5) Cf.p.271.

what he means by "action",gives occasion for a confusion of terms. Inasmuch as he agrees that the epic ought to be a single,simple action,it is manifest that,saying that the episodes are "parts of the action",he means that they are part of the whole narration or story,which includes both the plot and the episodes,and that they are not a part of the plot or "favola" used in the narrower sense as understood by sixteenth century critics. There is no reason to believe that he does not agree with the usual acceptation of the word "episode",which has already been defined. Robortelli recognizes only one unity - the unity of action. As regards the unity of time,the epic according to his idea may be extended to include matters covering not only a day and a night as does tragedy,but days,months,and even years, a very flexible and elastic freedom when compared to the limits imposed by the later critics, such as Minturno.

De Mores (1553),commenting on the opening words of Horace's Epistle to the Pisos,observes (1) that the parts of a poem should cohere so as not to appear distinct. Ariosto can be blamed,he continues,since there is nothing in his work which can be united, but all the parts are so separated that the confused narration greatly offends the mind and the memory of the reader.

Bernardo Segni maintains that the plot is one and perfect when it relates a single action. (2) In this way it can be said that the Iliad,the Odyssey,and the Aeneid are a single action. "Let it not disturb us,if in these poems many matters are found, because such things are episodes". But the actions of each of these poems is a single action,he repeats. The episodes treat of things outside of the action which the poet purposes to imitate,which, nevertheless,are not entirely separate from it,but agree with it in some part. Following the ideas of Robortelli ("Rubertello", as he calls him),he makes the statement that the heroic poem imitates an action lasting several years.

(1) Cf.p.1200.
(2) Cf.p.300.

Madius reasserts that in the heroic poem actions of many years are imitated.(1) Owing to the fact that it is narrative poetry,it is not strange if the story covers a space of seven years,as the Aeneid,or of twenty,as the Odyssey.

The contribution of the last three critics may be briefly summarized. De Nores,treating only the unity of action,declares that there should be an intimate relation among all the parts of a poem. Segni is the first to define the episodes in a concise manner as parts separate from the plot,a conception held by Robortelli but not clearly expressed by him. Both Segni and Madius, in stating that the epic imitates an action lasting several years, show that in their minds there is no conception of a narrow unity of time for the heroic poem.

In the work of Giraldi Cinthio defending the Romanzi we find a far different idea concerning unity from that which we have met heretofore. The writer of the Romanzi chooses a subject not of one action of one man but of " one or more illustrious actions of one or more excellent men". (2) Ariosto and Boiardo,he believes, have fulfilled these conditions. The subject matter ofthe Romanzi is different from the works of Virgil and Homer because both of these have undertaken to imitate a single action of a single man, whereas Ariosto and Boiardo have imitated many actions not only of one man but of many.(3) "And although it appears that Aristotle blames in his Poetics those who wrote a Theseid or a Heracleid, he does not condemn them (if his words are well considered) on account of the composition or the subject,but because it appeared to these authors whom he blames that inwriting the deeds of a single man they were making a poem of a single action,an opinion certainly far from true,and worthy of being blamed".(4) "All the poetic com-

(1) Cf.p.93.
(2) Cf.p.8.
(3) Cf.p.11.
(4) Cf.p.14.

positions which contain deeds of heroes are not restricted within the bounds which Aristotle has imposed upon poets who write poems of a single action". (1) Giraldi contends that it is better to follow many actions than a single action,because it seems that this method is more adapted to the composition in the form of Romanzi than a single action,for this diversity of actions carries with it a variety which is delightful and furnishes ample opportunity for the introduction of episodes or pleasing digressions and events which could never fittingly happen in that manner of poetry which describes a single action.(2) Despite this greater freedom in choice of subject,he cautions the poet,however,to keep in mind the harmonious arrangement of the matter. "And this disposition ought not to be alone considered in the principal parts,which are beginning,middle,and end,but in every smaller section of these parts". (3) He adopts as an excellent simile that of the body, comparing it to a composition,as follows: " Just as a man's body is made of bones,nerves,flesh,and skin,so the compositions of good poets who write Romanzi,ought to have parts in the body of the poem which correspond to the parts of the human body". The sections should be joined to each other like parts of the body, though in a manner different from that of Homer and Virgil. The writers of Romanzi,having taken the actions of many from the beginning,have not been able to continue one matter from canto to canto, on account of the fact that all of them are intimately connected. But it has been necessary for them,after speaking of one of their characters,to pass to another,breaking off the narration of the first and entering into the deeds of the other,and with this order to continue until the end,"a thing which they have done with marvellous art".(4) There is an interesting passage showing Giraldi's

(1) Cf.p.22.
(2) Cf.p.25.
(3) Cf.p.26.
(4) Cf.p.41.

ideas regarding the nature of the episodes that may be treated. " There can be introduced into the compositions" he says,"loves, unexpected events,wrongs,vices,offenses,defences,deceits; deeds of courtesy,justice,liberality,virtue,treachery,faith,loyalty,etc., and such other episodes; and there can be introduced such variety and deligh t that the poem will become most pleasing".(1) Giraldi does not believe that the story of a whole life would be a poor composition or lacking in pleasure or utility. "For we willingly read in prose the life of Themistocles,Coriolanus,or Romulus, and of other excellent men,why ought it to be less pleasing and less profitable to read it composed in verse by a noble and wise poet? For he knows how the lives of heroes ought to be written in verse for an example to the world,like history".(2) As the Italian has its own forms of poetry different from those of other tongues and other countries,the Tuscan poet ought not to be confined within the limits within which the Greeks and the Latins were constrained, but ought to proceed along the paths which the best Italian poets have indicated,with the same authority which the Greeks and Latins had in their language. "And this is the reason that I have many times smiled at those who have wished to place the writers of Romanzi under the laws of art given by Aristotle and Horace, not considering the fact that neither one nor the other knew this tongue nor this manner of composing".(3) Giraldi,nevertheless,does not lightly cast aside the precepts of the ancients. "I do not say this,however,because I blame the precepts which are necessary to good composition, as are those which Aristotle,Cicero,and the other ancients gave".(4)

Giraldi conceives the heroic poem as being in three forms: that describing one action of one man,that narrating many actions

(1) Cf.p.43.
(2) Cf.p.20.
(3) Cf.p.45.
(4) Cf.p.75.

of one man, and lastly, that narrating many actions of many men. He would prescribe for the first form unity of action along with all the other precepts of Aristotle and Horace. The second, that condemned by Aristotle, manifestly would not be governed by his rules. The third form, under which would be included the works of Boiardo and Ariosto, and infact all the Romanzi, would likewise be devoid of Aristotelian unity of action and its attendant unity of time. Giraldi, although declaring his respect for the precepts of the ancients, believes that the Romanzi furnish a type which is not governed by their laws, inasmuch as it is a genre invented since their time. He accepts the Aristotelian idea of the organism, however, as excellent, and despite the greater freedom in choice of subject which he permits, he cautions an adherence to the organic idea of arrangement, a matter which has to do with the question of treatment rather than with that of unity. He states much more clearly than had either Robortelli or Segni the basic relationship of the plot to the composition as a whole- "it is the bones and foundation of the whole work"; and although the Romanzi can include episodes dealing with events which would not be so conveniently represented in a poem dealing with a single action, they should fit into this larger organic whole as related parts of the body.

Pigna's ideas are similar, to a certain extent, to those of Giraldi, although it is interesting to see that there are differences between the two which one would not expect to find, in view of the fact that Pigna bewails loudly the appropriation of his ideas by his teacher. Pigna, too, contends that Romanzi are different from the older epic, chiefly on account of the fact that where the Greek and Latin poets speak continuously, the Italians interrupt the course of their poems from time to time.(1) He, too, although with less elaborateness, considers(2) the epic like an animal composed of substance and extraneous things (accidenti); the "accidenti" being the episodes which are digressions placed outside the principal action.(3)

(1) Cf.p.14.
(2) Cf.p.15.
(3) Cf.p.42.

As in a good composition the members will be proportionate,so in a poor one they will be prolonged where it is unnecessary.(1) He recognizes,however,that epic action is essentially one action of one person.(2) He differs from Giraldi in saying that although the Romanzi are well adapted to depict many deeds of many men,they devote themselves specially to one man who is celebrated above all the others,and thus they agree with the epics in depicting a single person. But this is not the case,he adds,when it is a question of taking a single fact,because the writers of Romanzi treat as many actions as they deem suitable,nor do the Romanzi agree with the epics in making one action supreme and the others subordinate.(3) Furthermore,Pigna,in direct opposition to the statement of Giraldi Cinthio,asserts that Aristotle has been the guide in Romanzi,although he did not speak of them.(4) He contends also that Ariosto followed classic models. "And although the love of Angelica could have been treated differently,nevertheless it was related in this manner following the example of the Iliad".(5) "And to show that he has followed the Greek and the Latin poets equally,he took care to begin his poem along the lines of the Iliad and to conclude it according to the form of the Aeneid".(6)

Pigna agrees with Giraldi,then,in the belief that the Romanzi observe no narrow unity of action. For him the Romanzi belong more properly to the second type of epic as outlined by the latter,that is,they describe many actions of one man rather than many actions of many men,under which category the Romanzi had been placed by

(1) Cf.p.9.
(2) Cf.p.25.
(3) Cf.p.25.
(4) "Et come in tutto il Duello non mai da lui veduto,lume ne diede esso Aristotele,cosi quivi ne Romanzi è stato la nostra guida,benchè egli mai non ne parlasse" (p.65). (And just as Aristotle has given information regarding the duel although he never saw one,so has he been our guide in Romanzi although he never spoke of them).
(5) Cf.p.78.
(6) Cf.p.80.

Giraldi. In treating as many actions of one man as was deemed suitable,not making one action supreme and the others subordinate,the writers of the Romanzi,despite Pigna's assertion,committed the very fault condemned by Aristotle when he spoke of the mistake of the writers treating many actions of one man. Apparently ignorant of this fact,Pigna pretends that Aristotle had been the guide to such writers. If Aristotle has been followed,one is safe in asserting that it certainly was not in the chapter dealing with the unity of action.

Bernardo Tasso,writing to Benedetto Varchi under date of March 6,1559,reduces the whole question to the consideration of the effect produced. "If Aristotle were born in this age and should see the most pleasing poem of Ariosto's,knowing the force of custom and realizing that it furnishes so much delight,I do not know whether he would change his opinion and consent that a heroic poem should be made of many actions,giving it new rules and prescribing for it new laws with his wonderful learning and judgment". (1)

Capriano,disagreeing with Aristotle when he gives precedence to tragedy,declares that the fact that the epic includes an action of many years does not cause it to have less unity or to be less pleasing.

Minturno,in the De Poeta,repeats the Aristotelian precept that the epic plot should be one,complete,and perfect,and that the beginning,middle,and end should be in accord.(2) Like Robortelli and Giraldi he uses the illustration of the organism. "Is not the human body complete and one? But its parts are head,arms,hands,legs, and feet,which by themselves are complete and one". Therefore when a heroic poem is occupied with one action the plot will be one; and because it can be protracted to a great length,it is customary for such a poem to embrace events from which many dramatic plots can be formed. Although the heroic narrative is permitted to include many things, it ought not,however,to be so prolonged that it seem

(1) Cf.Porcacchi,pages 444ff.
(2) Cf.p.147.

overburdened,nor of such length that it cannot be completely grasped.(1) Minturno does not share the opinion of such writers as Segni,Madius, and Capriano. Although declaring that the plot will be one if the action is one,he continues saying that if a writer observe the poems of the ancients he will discover that epic actions are perfect if within the period of one year.(2)

Bernardo Tasso,as we have seen,believes that Aristotle,captivated by the charm of the Orlando Furioso,would have revised his precepts so as to admit many actions of many people,but Capriano, admitting into the epic an action covering many years,nevertheless contends that the unity of time is still observed in such an action, and would consequently not feel that,so far as the unity of time was concerned,Aristotle would need to revise his ideas. Minturno, entertaining a much narrower concept of the unity of time, believes that actions treated by the epic should not exceed the space of one year.

Vettori contends that Aristotle teaches that one epic can be rightly prolonged to the same time limit that is required for the representation of a number of tragedies,"so that if the spectators remain in the theatre for the space of eight hours paying attention to many tragedies which are portrayed,to that same space of time the epic may be prolonged,for it may be supposed that men would hear with pleasure an epic poem recited for the same number of hours." He admonishes epic writers,therefore,that they should not give the epic a larger body than would be that of all those tragedies which are produced in one day,for although epic poems were not recited in the theatre in the same manner as tragedy,yet,if they were read aloud the recitation or reading of the epic poem would consume the same amount of time as that occupied in the action of the tragic plot,an idea which was later attacked by Castelvetro. Vettori

(1) Cf.p.152.
(2) "Epicas intra annum absolutas atque perfectas esse comperiet", (p.133).

observes that when Aristotle asserts that the epic is extended to its proper length by means of episodes,he means that without episodes the epic would be insignificant (1),or in other words,he wishes to signify that the length which is perceived in every epic work is contributed by the episodes,and is not part of the argument; "for some ignorant person who could not distinguish episodes from the argument of the poem thought that this prolixity arose from the argument".(2) Vettori is merely corroborating the assertions of Segni,Giraldi,and others regarding the true nature and use of the episodes.

Scaliger seems to lay himself open to the criticism of Vettori as being one of the "imperiti" who fail to distinguish episodes from the argument where he says that inasmuch as several plots can be extracted from the Iliad and the Odyssey,they cease to be a complete organism with one plot. "Finally Aristotle laughs at those who think that either the Iliad or the Odyssey is a complete organism with one plot,for he says that one may draw several plots from either one,because there are many parts and many episodes. So it was that the ancients used to recite certain portions taken from the whole body,as,for instance,the battle and catalogue of the ships,the summoning of the spirits,those things which happened on Circe's island,etc.".(3) One should certainly not be overhasty in condemning Scaliger as "imperitus",but he is unquestionably open to the criticism of failing to state his thought clearly,and of failing to define his terms. When Aristotle says that several plots can be composed from the poems of Homer he means tragic plots and not epic plots (Scaliger implies the latter meaning by his use of the word "fabulas") and consequently Aristotle does not "laugh at those who think that the Iliad or the Odyssey is a complete organism with one plot". It will be recalled that what Aristotle really

(1) "Sine episodiis pusillam futuram fuisse epopoeiam".
(2) Cf.p.173.
(3) Cf.lib.I,cap.V.

said was that the "Iliad and the Odyssey have many parts,each one of them in itself of some magnitude; yet the structure of the two Homeric poems is as perfect as can be,and the action in them is as nearly as possible one action"(1), and Aristotle recommends that they be accepted as models in so far as they are one organism with one plot. Scaliger,however,recognizes the need of unity when he subscribes to the Aristotelian idea of the organism. The author should divide his book into chapters,"all so related that they constitute an organic body".

Inasmuch as Trissino's Arte Poetica is little more than a paraphrase of Aristotle,we find almost all the precepts of the Stagirite repeated with only slight variation. In the fifth division, for instance (2),Trissino says that care must be taken in forming the plot,that it be one,complete,and great; and this "one" does not mean that it includes all the deeds of a single man,a matter in which many are deceived. Trissino gives as an example of this idea of unity the Decameron of Boccaccio. Citing as he does the Decameron as an example of such unity,he interprets in its broadest significance the idea of Aristotle that the plot should be a complete whole in itself,based on a single action,so as to enable the work to produce its own pleasure with all the organic unity of a living creature. It is not the many actions of one man,but a unity resulting from the concerted action of many. The epic,being narration,can make many things terminate together,a fact which increases the length of the poem,and this length,besides making it appear more magnificent,is useful in causing the minds of the auditors to change in various ways,and in introducing unlike episodes,for the similar soon causes satiety.(3)

Minturno in L'Arte poetica repeats his assertion in the De Poeta that if the subject matter is one,the plot is one.(4) That which is one,he continues,is necessarily perfect and complete.

(1) Cf.Bywater,p.91.
(2) Cf.p.97.
(3) Cf.p.114.
(4) Cf.p.10.

He calls complete that which has beginning,middle,and end,and he pronounces that perfect whose parts are arranged in an orderly manner,and as nothing is beautiful which lacks order and greatness, both of these qualities are necessary in the epic. Since the poem comprises only those things which pertain to one end,it does not treat all that which happens at one and the same time and in the same affair,which is manifold or not of one manner.(1) He contends that the Romanzi are not the poetry which Aristotle and Horace taught.(2) There are those,he continues,who confess that the Romanzi do not conform to the form and rule which Homer and Virgil followed,and yet obstinately defend this error,saying that because such compositions treat of the deeds of wandering knights,they need not conform to Aristotelian laws,but require the inclusion of diverse matters. The heroic poem imitates one memorable,perfect deed of one illustrious person; the Romanzi have for their object the assembling of knights and ladies,and the treatment of matters of war and of peace. The Romanzi describe diverse countries and various things which happen in all the time which the story covers. Homer,he agrees,did the same thing to a certain extent,but everything he described had its origin from one beginning and was directed to one end. This is not the case in the Romanzi.(3) However,he contends that Ariosto could have adhered to the same law of unity by treating the same subject matter in a different way. If Ariosto was not content to treat only the affairs of Ruggiero as the most excellent of all the knights,he should have composed another story devoted only to his deeds,just as Homer had done,who praised Achilles in the Iliad and Ulysses in the Odyssey. He would not then have pretended in the title that he was writing of Orlando,and then in reality described the deeds of another as the principal character, nor would he have assembled a great mass of persons and things such

(1) Cf.p.25.
(2) Cf.p.26.
(3) Cf.p.27.

that a whole poem would be required to describe some of them. Minturno does not say this to detract from the worth of Ariosto as a poet,but rather to excuse him for not knowing better than to follow the abuses of the Romanzi to please the many.(1) The writers of Romanzi interrupt frequently the course of the poem,going from one part to another,and taking up the thread again where they left off. The interruption of the narrative,contends Minturno,interferes with the enjoyment of the reader. The interest is aroused by many incidents contributing to the same end,not by the breaking off of one narration to take up another. Minturno does not believe that the plot ought to extend beyond a point where there is a change for worse or better fortune. But as a perfect and complete and well-formed animal causes delight,so is the plot sufficiently complete which can cause pleasure to the minds of others.(2) It is manifest that Virgil and Homer have undertaken to treat a complete and perfect matter concerning things which happened only within a year. Homer treats in the Iliad that which happened in the tenth year of the Trojan War,in the Odyssey,the return of Ulysses to Ithaca. These authors treat many things which are not a part of the plot,but parts outside of it; it is necessary,however,that they be so connected that although they can be separated from it without detriment to it,nevertheless they should appear to be derived from it and to be directed to the same end.(3) Again,speaking of episodes (4),he reiterates that they can be separated from the plot without any detriment other than the loss of richness. "But,although it has

(1) Cf.p.29.
(2) Cf.p.11.
(3) Cf.p.13.
(4) Cf.p.16.

this prerogative of being able to increase its length so much, the subject matter of the plot cannot as a result be more than one, nor deal with things which happened in a longer space than a year."(1)

Both Trissino and Minturno are followers of the ideas of Aristotle regarding the unity of action, or rather followers of their own interpretations of the ideas of Aristotle. Both repeat the words of the Stagirite when they assert that the plot should be a single, perfect, and complete whole, with a length capable of being grasped. But just as we saw in his introduction to the Italia liberata, Trissino shows in his Poetica that he has a broad idea of unity of action when he cites the Decameron as an example of such unity. This long succession of unrelated stories apparently appears to Trissino to be sufficiently bound together by the plan stated in the introduction, to be considered a unit, although it seems difficult for us to consider the Decameron as anything but a series of stories describing many actions of many men. Such a thing is evidently permissible according to Trissino and Minturno, if everything has its origin from one beginning and is directed to one end. It was on the ground of failing to adhere to this arrangement that Minturno criticizes the Romanzi. Minturno seems to have grasped Aristotle's precepts on the unity of action and shows complete accord with his declarations, but he differs from Aristotle as regards the unity of time. Minturno finds justification for his theory of the limitation of the length of the epic action to one year in the practice of homer in the Iliad and the Odyssey, and thus differs from the Stagirite who, basing his conclusions on the same poems, states that the epic has no definite limits. Trissino followed Aristotle to the extent of not endeavoring to establish any time limits for the heroic poem. It may be said, then, that Minturno followed Aristotle in the unity of action but not in the unity of time, and Trissino follows his "Master" in disregarding the unity of time.

(1) Cf.p.25.

but does not follow him as to the unity of action.

For Castelvetro the dramatic unity of action is only a consequence of the unities of time and place,and hence subordinate to them;and since,as we shall see later,he is not inclined to restrict the epic as to time and place,so the Aristotelian unity of action is of relatively little importance to him. He has,in fact,a very broad and inclusive idea of the unity of action as applied to the epic. He repeats the Aristotelian precept that the plot should be one and contain a single action of one person,but he follows this statement with the assertion that the epic plot can relate not only one but many actions.(1) The epic,then,can have a great number of actions. The question to be determined,consequently,is the meaning which Castelvetro gives to the word "action". Is he here making "action" synonymous with "plot" as he does elsewhere (2),or is he speaking literally of the deeds of the personages which will logically be included in one plot,as he does in another passage? (3) The latter interpretation seems to accord more with the general statement of his principles. He contends,for example,that there are numerous ways of uniting many different actions and of making them become one action and one body,as for instance,the method of adhering to a limited time or place,reputing many actions one because they happened at the same time,or reputing many actions one because they happened in the same place (p.181). The mere fact that the actions occur at the same time,however,is not sufficient,for coincidence of actions does not necessarily entail any inter-relationship of events. Those epic poets err who write of actions

(1) "Laquale può raccontare non pure una attione,ma più,& lunghissime,& avenute in diversi paesi"(p.179).

(2) "Ma ci dobbiamo ricordare * * che non si può far tragedia che sia lodevole,la quale non habbia due attioni,ciò è,due favole,quantunque l'una sia principale,l'altra accessoria"(p.692); and again: "Se le cose imaginate sono piu,le imagini debbano essere più.& per conseguente,che la favola,la quale è imagine dell' attione,sia uno,o più,secondo che l'attione è una,o più."

(3) "Non ha dubbio niuno,che,se nell'historia si narra sotto un raccontamento più attioni d'una persona sola * * nella poesia si potrà sotto una favola narrare senza biasimo più attioni d'una persona sola" (p.178).

which happened in one time to one person or to more,when there is no interdependence in the happenings (p.507). One can be reasonably sure,then,in concluding that,when Castelvetro joins the words "plot" and "action",he means the main action,just as we speak of it,and elsewhere he desires to signify the deeds of the personages.

He repeats the idea already expressed by Robortelli,Giraldi,and Vettori that beginning,middle,and end can first be considered in a large whole,and can then be considered in some part of that whole,as if that part were another whole although smaller (p.511). The Trojan War,which lasted ten years,would be considered a perfect action,and the wrath of Achilles, which is part of the aforesaid war,considered by itself,would be regarded as another perfect action. The explanation of the matter lies in the fact that for Castelvetro the unity of action is not the result of any necessity,but is merely the effect of the desire on the part of the author to show greater excellence.(1) He contends that Homer did not adopt the unity of action as a result of the restriction in time and place,but that the real reason for the adherence to such a unity was that Homer considered the singularity of action more beautiful.(2) Castelvetro declares,and with more than mild disapproval,that Aristotle can adduce no other reason or proof than the example of tragic poets and of Homer for this singularity of action. Such examples, apparently,are not convincing to Castelvetro. What is more,he proceeds to expound his theories of this broader unity of action in direct opposition to the teaching of Aristotle. He opposes absolutely the views of the Stagirite. "If we believe the words of Aristotle"— and there is a very strong implication that Castelvetro does not—,"we should have to blame Vida,who composed the Christiade in which are related many miraculous actions of Christ,because like those poets blamed by Aristotle,he narrated many actions of one person. And furthermore (that is,if we believe the words of Aristotle), we should not be able to commend as a well constructed plot that of the Iliad of Homer,for,although it contains a single action(or rather a part of an action, according to Aristotle,that is,a part of the Trojan War)it is not an action of

(1) "Ma la predetta singolarità della favola non è miga stata introdotta per necessità,ma per vaghezza di gloria del poeta e per dimostrare l'eccellenza e la singolarità dello 'ngegno"(p.504); and again on p.179:"Laonde è da conchiudere * * che la favola dell'epopea dee contenere una attione d'una persona non per necessità,ma per dimostratione dell' eccellenza del poeta".

(2) "La qual ragione di strettezza di tempo,& di luogo,non ha potuto operare

a single person,but of a people,because that war was made by common consent of the chiefs of the Greeks". "And so much the loss should we be able to consider" (that is,'if we believe the words of Aristotle') "~~so much the loss should we be able to consider~~ as a well-constructed plot that which not only contains many actions of one person,or one action of many persons, but also many actions of many persons" (p.178). (1) All this Castelvetro considers not only possible but proper to include in the epic plot. He sees in the practice and method of historians the example and justification of a similar procedure by the poets,inasmuch as for him poetry is an imitation of history ("rassomiglianza d'historia"). If in history,he maintains (p.178), one can narrate many actions of a single person,as Plutarch,Suetonius,and others have done,there is no doubt that one can narrate in poetry a single action of a whole people. After thus enlarging the number of the personages to include a whole nation engaged in one action,it is but a step for Castelvetro to justify the inclusion into poetry of the many actions of a people such as those treated by Livy and other historians. And if one concede as permissible many actions of one people,it is readily recognized that many actions of many people can be admitted into the narration of the heroic poem (p.179). Such,then,is the latitude with which Castelvetro treats the unity of action. But,just as we shall see in his treatment of the unities of time and place,Castelvetro the radical becomes Castelvetro the conservative by the added assertion that,after all,the poet displays in a marked manner his judgment and industry when he treats a plot comprising but a single ac-

che homero habbia presa una attione sola,& d'una persona sola nell'epopea,la quale può raccontare non pure una attione,ma più,& lunghissime,& avenute in diversi paese. Perchè egli è da dire,che nella singolarità dell'attione hebbe altro rispetto,ciò è,che egli giudicò,che la favola sarebbe più bella,& egli più ammirato,se non prendesse se non una attione sola,e d'una persona sola"(p.179

(1) "Adunque la favola dell'epopea vuole essere una sola,& contenere una attione sola d'una persona sola,secondo che apertamente si coglie dalle parole d'Aristotele,alle quali se presteremo fede,ci converrà biasimare Girolamo Vida, che compose la Christeida nella quale si raccontano le molte & miracolose attione di Christo,perciochè costoro raccontano più attioni d'una persona,sì come facevano ~~che~~ poeti biasimati da Aristotele,che composero l'Hercoleida & la Theseida,ciò è più attioni d'Hercole,& più attioni di Theseo. Et appresso non potremo commendare per favola ben fatta quella dell'Iliada d'Homero,la quale,avegna che contenga un'attione sola,o più tosto una parte d'una attione secondo Aristotele,ciò è una parte della guerra troiana,non è però attione d'una persona sola,ma d'una gente,perciochè quella guerra fu fatta di comune consentimento de principi della Grecia. Et tanto meno potremo ricevere per favola ben fatta quella,che non solamente contiene più attioni d'una persona, o una attione di più persone,ma insieme contiene più di più persone,come contiene il poema delle Trasformationi d'Ovidio.& questo vitio è anchora ricono-

tion of a single person (a plot,that is,which at first sight would not appear capable of causing pleasure to the hearers) in such a way that he causes the readers as much delight as other poets can scarcely cause with many actions of many persons.(1) And although he would permit unusual freedom in the unity of action,his basic belief is summarized in the words already cited:" The epic ought to comprise one action of one person not from necessity,but for a demonstration of the excellence of the poet"(p.179). It will be seen that he admits into the legitimate domain of the epic the Romanzi of which Giraldi,Pigna,and Minturno had constituted a genre apart,although he did not entirely countenance the"improper digressions" in the Orlando Furioso. (2)

Castelvetro deduced the dramatic unities of time and place from the practice and the theory of the tragedy,and their application to the epic is of secondary importance to him. Just as we have seen that he treats in a broad way the unity of action,so does he assert,regarding the unity of time, that the time of the action of the epic is not determined,because the epic, narrating with words alone,can relate an action which happened during the course of many years and in diverse places,since the words may present to our minds things distant in time and place (p.109). The epic,then,not having to conform to the restricted limits of time and place like tragedy, can relate an action which happened in many years,not only in many days,and in places far distant,not only in one place. Castelvetro does not agree with the commentators such as Vettori,who believe,first,that Aristotle meant that the reading or recitation ("constitutione") of the epic should

sciuto nell'Orlando Furioso di Lodovico Ariosto,narrando l'uno & l'altro più attioni di più persone" (p.178).

(1) "In narrare una attione sola d'una persona,che in prima vista non pare haver potere di ritenere gli animi ad ascoltare con diletto,si scopre il giudicio,e la 'ndustria del poeta,operando quello con una attione d'una persona,che altri apena possono operare con molte attioni e di molte persone"(p.179

(2) "Ma,chi vuole vedere essempio di digressioni sconvenevoli fatte per compiacere altrui,legga quelle dell' Orlando Furioso di Lodovico Ariosto introdotte hora per via di prophetia & hora per via d'altri modi"(p.220).

last as long as the presentation of several tragedies,which are recited one after the other in one day,and,secondly,that the epic should not be so long that it cannot be read in a day. Although Aristotle had placed the discussion of the length of the presentation of tragedy outside the theory of poetry,Castelvetro includes the question in his treatise,and identifying the time of presentation with the time of the action of the tragedy disagrees with the first rule regarding the epic,because many tragedies naturally ought not to be capable of being recited in one day,one after the other,according to his idea, for each tragedy has its limits conformable to one turn of the sun. How then,he asks,if each tragedy occupies a whole day,can several be recited in one day,one after the other? Regarding the second rule,Castelvetro asks: "If the epic ought not to exceed one day in reading,according to Aristotle, where would be the divinity of Homer (who is so much admired by him), who has made two epic poems neither of which could be read even in a few days?" (p.532) Regarding these two points Castelvetro denies,then,that the length of the epic should be equal to the number of tragedies read in a day,and that the length of the epic is in reality restricted to one day. He ascribes to the poem a length conformable to the natural needs of the audience,and concludes that the epic cannot be extended to such a length that it would be unreasonable to recite it to the people at one time,that is,in as many hours as the people could listen in comfort. Therefore the long epics are divided into such lengths as are "verisimile",so that the author may comfortably recite and the auditors listen to him in a single time. Castelvetro cannot believe that Homer would have committed such an error as to continue twenty-four books without any division,reciting all of them at one time. The epic can divide its narration into many books,which nevertheless do not contain more than one action, and can recite one book per day without occasioning any great difficulty in following the story (p.110). Despite this great freedom in the unity of time,concludes Castelvetro,(and this statement is significant) the more the time of the action in the epic will be restricted,the more praiseworthy it will be. The same is true of the unity of place. The epic is not limited as regards place,for its action can take place in heaven or hell,on land or sea,or in the air. "Nevertheless,in the epic,also,the more the place is restricted the more is it commendable and the more does

the epic succeed"(p.535).

But Castelvetro,in spite of the singular breadth of vision which we have noted,does not entirely escape from the tendency of the typical sixteenth century critic to impose rigorous restrictions on the forms of literature. While apparently allowing extreme liberty,he qualifies his assertions. The unity of action is not imperative,but the poet who desires to show his excellence will strive for it; the unity of time is not necessary, yet the more the time of the action in the epic is restricted the more praiseworthy it will be. There are no limits regarding the place in which an epic action may occur,yet the more limited the place the more is the poem to be commended.

The whole question of unity may be summarized in a few words. At the outset it should be understood that the unities are deduced primarily from the practice of tragedy and were applied only secondarily to the epic. This is particularly true of what little is said regarding the unities of time and place in the epic,but Aristotle discusses the whole subject of unity chiefly with regard to tragedy,and much of what his followers have said,is said with an eye to the example of tragic unity. Aristotle,it will be recalled,prescribing for the epic only the unity of action,maintains that a poem must have the organic unity of a living creature. The unity of a plot does not consist in its having one man as its subject; an infinity of things may happen to that one man which have no connection and consequently do not form one action. The important matter is that the events should lead to the same end and be intimately related to each other. There is the additional requirement that the poem deal with a subject neither too large nor too small,but one in which beginning,middle,and end may be grasped. Episodes may be introduced to diversify the interest and embellish the narrative,but the poet must bear in mind that in a well-constructed plot every incident is needful,so that a plot with irrevelant incidents violates a fundamental principle of dramatic construction. In some inferior epics,although there is a certain unity in the story,it is not of the right kind,as the action consists of a plurality of parts,each of them easily detached from the rest of the work. Several tragedies may be made from a single epic of this type,

whereas the Iliad or the Odyssey does not supply materials for more than one or two. This emphatic assertion of the unity of action in the Homeric epic is not quite in harmony with statements made elsewhere in the Poetice. The story of the Iliad,for instance,is said to have a plurality of actions in it.(1) This plurality of action is not,one can feel assured,condoned by Aristotle; on the contrary,to the extent that there is a plurality of action, to that same extent are the poems of Homer comparable to the "inferior epics".

All the writers of the sixteenth century,with one or two exceptions, recognize the importance of the unity of action in the epic. Many of the commentators,such as Paccius,Madius,Vettori,and Robortelli,merely repeat the words of Aristotle; Minturno and Scaliger with Robortelli adopt and stress mildly the idea of the organism. As for the rest,in saying that they all recognize the importance of the unity of action,one is at the same time summing up the total extent of their agreement. The unity of action for Trissino is different,for instance,from the unity of action according to Castelvetro,and different again from that of Giraldi or Pigna. Trissino's apparent broadening of the Aristotelian unity to include his war of Justinian is an insignificant departure,compared with that of Castelvetro who does not even pretend to follow Aristotle. Castelvetro bases his whole contention on the fact that poetry is an imitation of history,and as such is capable of including all those things with which history deals. He thus is led to admit a very comprehensive unity of action for the epic,which treats of the many deeds of many men. Fundamentally he is contending for the same sort of unity as that advocated by Giraldi and Pigna,but they are led to adopt

(1) "One should also remember what has been said more than once,and not write a tragedy on an epic body of incident (i.e. one with a plurality of stories in it), by attempting to dramatize,for instance,the entire story of the Iliad"(chap.18,Bywater,p.53); and again,chapter 26:" We must remember that there is less unity in the imitation of epic poets,as is proved by the fact that any one work of theirs supplies matter for several tragedies. In saying that there is less unity in an epic,I mean an epic made up of a plurality of actions,in the same way as the Iliad and Odyssey have many such parts,each one of them in itself of some magnitude". (Bywater,p.91)

this broader unity by pursuing different ways; Castelvetro arrives over the broad highway of history, Giraldi and Pigna by the devious pathway of the episodes in the Romanzi.

For Giraldi and Pigna the whole idea of unity of action may be summarized in the one word "organism". Plato, in the Phaedrus, had insisted that every artistic composition should have an organic unity. "You will allow that every discourse ought to be constructed like a picture of a living organism, having its own body and head and feet; it must have middle and extremities, drawn in a manner agreeable to one another and to the whole". Aristotle, as we have seen, incorporated this concept, which is the basis of his theories regarding unity, and it is interesting to note that he adds the idea of a resultant pleasure - "with all the organic unity of a living creature, so as to enable the work to produce its own proper pleasure". Although Giraldi approves of the disregard of Aristotelian precepts in the Romanzi, he nevertheless shows a profound respect for this fundamental idea of organism. Giraldi and Pigna actually consider that the Orlando Furioso is an example of such an organic whole, although there is no doubt that Aristotle would have condemned such a work because its events are not intimately connected, nor do they all lead to the same end. These two critics, in other words, believe that although a poem treats of many actions of many people, it may be none the less an organism. Giraldi and Pigna, then, do not feel the urgency of any adherence to a narrow idea of unity any more than Castelvetro, yet all three feel the need of a certain unity of action in the epic.

Episodes and their place in the narration are defined with varying degrees of clearness by such writers as Robortelli, Segni, Giraldi, and Vettori, who agree that episodes are a part of the whole narration but not of the main action or plot. Other writers, such as Vida, ~~for instance~~, either fail to mention the use of episodes, or if they make any mention of them, fail to define them.

Aristotle imposes no unity of time for the epic. In the passage in which he states that it must be possible "for the beginning and end of the work to be taken in in one view- a condition which will be fulfilled if the poem be shorter than the old epics, and about as long as a series of

tragedies offered for one hearing"—he is speaking merely of the material length of the epic, and not of any unity of time. He is referring here to the real length of the work itself, a length to be measured by the number of lines the poem would take up in a book, or the number of hours required for recitation. Aristotle never loses sight of the obvious fact that the epic (the Iliad, for instance) extends its length to several thousand lines, whereas a tragedy rarely exceeds some sixteen hundred lines. This difference in length between the epic and the tragedy is, for Aristotle, the natural consequence of another kind of difference, i.e., the fact that the action in a Greek tragedy is as a rule kept within a limit of some twenty-four hours, whereas that of the epic may extend over weeks, months, or years. With this difference, therefore, in the extent of the action, in the quantum of matter to be included in the story, it is only natural that there should be a corresponding difference in the length of the external form in the two cases. Assuming this correspondence, Aristotle explains the great length of an epic, as compared with a tragedy, as due to the length of time over which the epic action extends. In other words, he passes from the idea of the actual length, the actual time required for the recitation, to that of the imaginary time covered by the action of the poem, apparently with the tacit assumption that the two things are so closely connected that the one may serve to explain the other. It would be absolutely wrong to deduce, however, that Aristotle is anywhere making the time of the actual recitation of the epic coincide with the time of presentation of a series of tragedies acted in a single day. The epic, then, must be a whole, but not too long a whole. This condition will be fulfilled if the epic is about the length of a trilogy, and thus considerably shorter than the Iliad and the Odyssey. He evidently thinks that an epic on the old Homeric scale of length would prove too great a strain on the memory and attention of the literary public of his own time.

Castelvetro misinterprets Aristotle to the extent of making the time of presentation and the imagined time of tragedy coincide, and then transfers this conception to the epic. Since several tragedies cannot be recited in one day, for according to Aristotle's own statement the action of a tragedy

occupies one day's time,then it is absurd to say,he contends,that the epic ought not to be longer than would take one day to read. If the epic is a long one,it should be divided into lengths which the people could listen to in comfort,and he thus does away at one stroke with the actual length which Aristotle had deemed advisable. Castelvetro thinks that he finds an inconsistency in Aristotle,who is such an admirer of Homer,and yet advocates the more restricted length. This,of course,is not an inconsistency in Aristotle,but merely a concession to the literary taste of his ~~own~~ time. For Castelvetro,then,the epic is untrammeled by any unity of time,but the more it is restricted the more enjoyable will the poem be.

Any concept of a restricted unity of time for the epic is entirely lacking in the majority of the writers,but Capriano,feeling such a unity necessary,urges that the mere fact that the epic treats an action of several years should not cause it to be considered as adhering any less to a unity of action. Minturno is the first to establish a fixed limit for the epic action,when he states that it should not exceed one year. Vettori,having the precept of Aristotle in mind,maintains that the length of the epic is equal to the number of tragedies that can be read in one day,or,in other words,it should be of a length that could be read in about eight hours,but he has nothing to say of the unity of time. Such writers as Robortelli, Trissino,De Nores,Segni,Madius,and Scaliger have no conception of the existence of any such unity. Castelvetro is the only critic who recognizes a unity of place,although there are hints of such a theory found in previous works.

Chapter V.

Conclusion.

It should be understood from the outset that the following remarks are not a general criticism of the writers mentioned and their ideas as a whole, but are concerned only with their importance as regards their contribution to the discussion of the theory of the epic. Of the writers whom we have considered it would be well to keep in mind those who were commentators of Horace - Parrhasius, Robortelli, Philippus, Madius, Grifoli, De Nores, Luisinus, and Fabricius-, those who were commentators of Aristotle - Paccius, Robortelli, Segni, Madius, Vettori, and Castelvetro-, and those who were authors of "Poetics" or treatises on poetry, namely, Vida, Daniello, Varchi, Muzio, Giraldi Cinthio, Pigna, Lionardi, Capriano, Fracastoro, Minturno, Parthenio, Scaliger, Bernardo Tasso, Trissino, and Fabricius. Many of these critics contribute little or nothing to the theory of the epic, ~~many~~ others have contributed a great deal. It is only natural that the commentators of Horace contribute the least to the discussion, for the reason that the work of Horace is a general treatise on poetry with only a passing reference to the epic, and that the commentators as a rule confined themselves to a rather close following of the original. Of the editors of Horace, De Nores, Fabricius, and Luisinus have been found to be the most important, although relatively speaking, their contributions are negligible.

Of the commentators of Aristotle, Paccius gives nothing more than a translation with meagre introductory material; Robortelli and Madius, explaining the words of Aristotle, do little more than put in their own words the thought of the Stagirite, without attempting anything in the nature of an original discussion, such as Segni and Vettori, even if only to a limited extent, institute. Castelvetro is without any question the most important of the commentators. Having the benefit of the attempts of his predecessors in wrestling with some of the none too clear passages of the Stagirite, he digests their views and formulates new ideas which are at times absolutely contrary to the teaching of Aristotle, and Castelvetro frequently admits that

he realizes this difference. It is the very fact that he introduces so much of his own into the discussion that his work can be placed among the most important as well as the most difficult to interpret. ~~He has in fact so much to say that~~ At times it is almost impossible to reconcile his different statements. Castelvetro is dominated largely by one thought- that poetry is an imitation of history and should be in accord with historical truth. We have seen that, in the choice of the personages and of the subject, he advocates that the plot of the epic be constituted only of things known to have happened; we have seen that in the question of unity he felt that the epic should admit all the actions which were permissible in a history.

Of the authors of treatises on poetry we can dismiss with a word such writers as Vida, Muzio, Lionardi, Fracastoro, Parthenio, Capriano, and Fabricius, whose works are so general that they have no importance in the establishment of any theory regarding epic poetry, although at times they make noteworthy observations. Lionardi contends, for instance, that he who is not a good historian cannot be a good poet, and Capriano, the worshiper of Virgil, declares that Aristotle is wrong in giving preference to tragedy as a form of art higher than the epic.

Daniello, although he writes at an early period and eleven years before the Italia Liberata of Trissino, contributes many interesting observations, such as his views on the personages in the epic (1) and the relation between poet and historian, chiefly inspired by Horace but also showing familiarity with Aristotle and Plato. As Varchi delivered his Lezzioni della Poetica publicly in the Florentine Academy, we find that he seeks to present his material in an orderly arrangement with an endeavor to define his terms, so that his words are frequently worthy of being quoted. His concise definition of an epic poet and of "hero" (supra p.17) are good examples of this.

Trissino threw down the gauntlet to the champions of Romanzi when, resenting the fact that Ariosto had written to please the many, he said that he himself had purposed to write an heroic poem which

(1) Cf. page 14.

should be in complete conformity with the ideas of Aristotle and the practice of Homer," a thing which has not yet been done in the Italian language". Giraldi Cinthio took up the challenge and censuring Trissino for his many faults -for his minute descriptions,for his use of "versi sciolti",etc. - set out to show that although the Romanzi did not conform to the precepts of Aristotle they were none the less,in his estimation,the kind of heroic poem suitable to the Italian,and properly not trammelled by the laws of the Greek and Latin. Pigna fell into the dangerous ground of attempting to reconcile the rules governing the two forms of poetry (as,for instance,his compromise about the unity of action (p.42)) arguing that in some particulars the romanzi were exempt but in others they followed the Aristotelian precepts. Bernardo Tasso,an ardent admirer of Ariosto,believes that the whole question is determined primarily by the amount of pleasure that is derived from a work; its justification is in the pleasure produced. Minturno,condemning the Romanzi,does not relish the implication which he sees in the statement of Giraldi's that the epic in Italian is different from the heroic poem of the Greek or the Latin,and that the Italian is not subject to the same laws as the older epics. This constitutes,from Minturno's point of view,first,an admission of the inferiority of the Italian language,and secondly,an admission that poetic art is not the same at all times. He resents the first implication,for he believes that Italian is the equal of the Greek and the Latin; he answers the second by stating that if Homeric art was true at the time of its creation,it was equally true in the sixteenth century,no matter to what degree customs and life had changed in the interim. Speroni contemptuously dismisses all of Giraldi's contentions as being "senza nessun giudicio".

Trissino,as the initiator of this protracted discussion on the relative merits of the Romanzi and as the writer of the first classical epic in Italian,is a critic who holds a rather important place in the history of literature,although his contribution from the point of view of the originality of his ideas on the heroic epic is

meager. His long list of various kinds of subject matter which he admits into the poem, witnessing the genuineness of his admiration for the classical epics, shows primarily his conception of their didactic side. He is more original as regards his practice than as regards his theory. He has a broad idea of unity and of the subject matter of poetry, but otherwise he follows almost word for word the Poetics of Aristotle, merely choosing examples and illustrations from the moderns.

Trissino is not as important as Giraldi, for instance, for the latter is, above all else, original. He is original in his distinction between poet and historian (supra p. 18). Poetry presupposes knowledge, he says, which it is the province of the historian to relate, and there is a certain baseness in a poet who describes mechanical things. He follows no guide when he advocates a subject invented entirely from the new and unknown material. He is original in his ideas on unity. He advocates, as we have seen, not the unity of a single action of one man, but one broad enough to include many actions of many men, thus constituting a composition of large proportions, yet to his idea, none the less an organic whole.

Pigna's name is naturally associated with his teacher, Giraldi, for they both treat the same subject. Giraldi gives evidence of being the more disciplined and orderly thinker; he carries his idea of the organism into his own composition. Pigna from the beginning awakens the distrust of the reader by being too engrossed with the idea of censuring Giraldi for his alleged plagiarism; but Pigna's treatise is by no means to be despised. He, for example, is the first to mention the fact that the epic can include persons of low condition. He differs from Giraldi by maintaining that the Romanzi devote themselves specially to one man, and thus agree with the epic in depicting a single person, although they treat many actions; he contradicts Giraldi by asserting that Aristotle had been the guide for the Romanzi, and that Ariosto followed classic models even to the extent of patterning parts of the Orlando Furioso on the Iliad and the Aeneid.

Just as Giraldi is the most original, Minturno is the most comprehensive. He has digested thoroughly the precepts of the ancients, both Greek and Latin, and, defining his terms, presents his matter clearly and concisely. Minturno's breadth of comprehension and fondness for classification are shown, for instance, in his definition of "epic". "Epic", he says, is a synonym of "narrative". The epic for him, accordingly, comprises compositions in verse and prose, -dialogues, "novelle", bucolic poetry, epigrams, hymns, etc., and the heroic poem is consequently only a subdivision of the epic. His distinction between a "complete" and a "perfect" action shows a thorough understanding of Aristotle. He originates several theories of his own; he is the first, for example, to impose the limit of a year to the epic action, he is the first to present the relation of the Romanzi and the epic in a clear-cut fashion, the first, in other words, to contend that if Aristotelian rules were observed by the writers of Romanzi ~~that~~ the material could be made into true epic stuff. He is one of the first to link the word "move" with "delight" and "teach", when speaking of the purpose of the epic. In the Arte Poetica he gave himself more liberty than in the De Poeta; it is in the former work, for instance, that he arraigns the Romanzi.

Scaliger is another of the critics of primary importance. He is one of the most learned men of his time, with all the complacency of the sixteenth century critic (shown in his criticisms of Plato and in his attitude towards Aristotle, whom he calls fragmentary), with a broad outlook, as is evident from the catholicity of his views. Fortified by a wealth of erudite examples, he leaves few items in the general subject of poetry untouched; he compares Greeks with Latins, ancients with moderns, and talks impressively of the great names of antiquity. But Scaliger is largely dominated by one idea, just as we saw in the case of Castelvetro. The obsession of Scaliger is his ardent worship of Virgil, whose Aeneid becomes the standard by which all other heroic poems are judged. The idea of the organism is adopted because it is evident in the arrangement of the Aeneid; the recognition of the necessity of the supernatural

element,of the description of the deeds of heroes in war,of coherence in the characters,of the observance of decorum in the presentation of customs,all are derived from the practice of Virgil.

Of all the critics discussed,three names stand out as the most important - Minturno,Scaliger,and Castelvetro -,three names that typify in a remarkable manner the spirit of classicism. It is little wonder that the epics written in conformity with the rules imposed by these critics were vapid and barren failures,yet their ideas,although differing so fundamentally from those of the present day,influenced in a marked manner the opinion of the succeeding century.

It has not been an easy task to assemble and compare the views of the different writers on similar questions,although it has seemed to the author of this monograph that it is an undertaking that is at once interesting and worth while. It is interesting, for it is in the domain of ideas; it seems useful,for in no other way can the growth and the relationship of the theories be made manifest: and it is the hope of the present writer that sufficient light has been thrown on this rather difficult subject,despite the assertion of Mr.Saintsbury (1) that "to trace the development of the same ideas in different writers (i.e. those with whom the present work deals) would lead to inextricable confusion and criss-cross reference". It is to be hoped that the"confusion" has shown itself to be less "inextricable" and that the reader has not been perplexed by a needless mass of "criss-cross reference".

(1) History of Criticism,Vol.II,p.37.

Vita.

I was born in 1887 in Cleveland, Ohio. I was graduated with honor from the Johns Hopkins University in 1908, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Arts. I returned to the University in 1914 as a graduate student in the Romance Department, and held a scholarship for the two years, 1915-17.

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Ralph C.Williams.

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